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THE

LIFE AND WORDS

OF

CHRIST.

BY

CUNNINGHAM GEIKIE D.D.

"The LIFE was the Light of Men."—John i. 4.

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PREFACE.

No apology is needed for the publication of another Life of Christ, for the subject, to use the words of Mr. Carlyle, is "of quite perennial, infinite character, and its significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest."

The freshness and interest of the name of Jesus, and its power as a great factor in the spiritual history of the world, increase with each generation. The influence of His life, His words, and His death, have, from the first, been like leaven cast into the mass of humanity. He made religion spiritual instead of ceremonial and external; universal, instead of local. He gave us the magnificent dowry of a faith in One Common Father of the whole human race, and, thus, of a world-wide brotherhood of all mankind. He confirmed the doctrine of our immortality, and scattered abroad the germs of a heavenly life by His fundamental requirements of love to God and our neighbour. All reforms of individual and public life lie veiled in these principles, awaiting the advance of our moral sense, to apprehend and apply them. They have already given freedom to the slave; raised woman; purified morals; mitigated war; created liberty; and made humanity a growing force, in things private, civil, and political. All that love to our fellow-man can prompt finds itself only a copy of that Life which was spent in continually doing good, and the noblest self-sacrifice for others finds itself anticipated by Calvary.

To the individual Christian, JESUS is the Divine Saviour, to believe in Whom is life everlasting: to know Whom is to have peace with God. Love has no diviner emblem than the Good Shepherd: Beneficence no ideal so perfect, as that "it is more blessed to give than to receive:" Fidelity to duty no loftier standard than a life laid down at its command: Self-sacrifice no dream so perfect as the record of His death on the Cross.

To write the story of such a life is no easy task, but it is one beyond all others important for the best interests of the age. It is impossible to describe the infinite dignity of His person, but His words and acts are His legacy to us, which it is vital to study and apply.

I have tried in this book to restore, as far as I could, the world in which Jesus moved; the country in which He lived; the people among whom He grew up and ministered; the religion in which He was trained; the Temple services in which He took part; the ecclesiastical, civil, and social aspects of His time; the parties of the day, their opinions and their spirit; the customs that ruled; the influences that prevailed; the events, social, religious, and political, not mentioned in the Gospels, that formed the history of His lifetime, so far as they can be recovered.

In this picture, He, Himself, is, of course, the central figure, to which all details are subordinate. I have tried to present His acts and words as they would strike those who first saw or heard them, and have added only as much elucidation to the latter as seemed needed. All His Sayings and Discourses are given in full, for a Life in which He is not His own interpreter, must be defective.

No one can feel more keenly than myself how open such a book must be to criticism. Where the best and wisest have differed, I could not expect that all will agree with me, and I cannot hope to have escaped oversights, or even errors, in treating a subject so extensive. I can only plead my honest desire for truth and correctness, in mitigation of judgment.

I trust, however, that my book, as a whole, presents a reliable picture of the Life of Our Lord in the midst of the world in which He moved, and that it will throw light on the narratives in the Gospels, by filling up their brief outlines, where possible.

For the various sources to which I have been indebted I must only refer to the books named in the list of authorities at the beginning. I have used them freely, but always, so far as I know, with due acknowledgment.

And, now, go forth, My Book, and may He whose honour thou seekest, bless thee, and thy Unknown Reader!

THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The life of Jesus Christ, which is to be told in these pages, must ever remain the noblest and most fruitful study for all men, of every age. It is admitted, even by those of other faiths, that He was at once a great Teacher, and a living illustration of the truths He taught. The Mohammedan world give Him the high title of the *Masîh* (Messiah), and set Him above all the prophets. The Jews confess admiration of His character and words, as exhibited in the Gospels. Nor is there any hesitation among the great intellects of different ages, whatever their special position towards Christianity; whether its humble disciples, or openly opposed to it, or carelessly indifferent, or vaguely latitudinarian.

We all know how lowly a reverence is paid to Him in passage after passage by Shakspere, the greatest intellect known, in its wide, many-sided splendour. Men like Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, and Milton, set the name of Jesus Christ above every other. To show that no other subject of study can claim an equal interest, Jean Paul Richter tells us that "the life of Christ concerns Him who, being the holiest among the mighty, the mightiest among the holy, lifted with His pierced hand empires off their hinges, and turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and still governs the ages." Spinoza calls Christ the symbol of divine wisdom; Kant and Jacobi hold Him up as the symbol of ideal perfection, and Schelling and Hegel as that of the union of the divine and human. "I esteem the Gospels," says Goethe, "to be thoroughly genuine, for there shines forth from them the reflected splendour of a sublimity, proceeding from the person of Jesus Christ, of so divine a kind as only the divine could ever have manifested upon earth." "How petty are the books of the philosophers, with all their pomp," says Rousseau, "compared with the Gospels! Can it be that writings at once so sublime and so simple are the work of men? Can He whose life they tell be Himself no more than a mere man? Is there anything, in His character, of the enthusiast or the ambitious

sectary? What sweetness, what purity in His ways, what touching grace in His teachings! What a loftiness in His maxims, what profound wisdom in His words! What presence of mind, what delicacy and aptness in His replies! What an empire over His passions? Where is the man, where is the sage, who knows how to act, to suffer, and to die without weakness and without display? My friend, men do not invent like this; and the facts respecting Socrates, which no one doubts, are not so well attested as those about Jesus Christ. These Jews could never have struck this tone, or thought of this morality, and the Gospel has characteristics of truthfulness so grand, so striking, so perfectly inimitable, that their inventors would be even more wonderful than He whom they portray." "Yes, if the death of Socrates be that of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."

Thomas Carlyle repeatedly expresses a similar reverence. "Jesus of Nazareth," says he, "our divinest symbol! Higher has the human thought not yet reached." "A symbol of quite perennial, infinite character, whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest." Dr. Channing, of Boston, the foremost man in his day among American Unitarians, is equally marked in his words. "The character of Jesus," says he, "is wholly inexplicable on human principles." Matthias Claudius, one of the people's poets of Germany, last century, writes to a friend, "No one ever thus loved [as Christ did], nor did anything so truly great and good as the Bible tells us of Him ever enter into the heart of man. It is a holy form, which rises before the poor pilgrim like a star in the night, and satisfies his innermost craving, his most secret yearnings and hopes." "Jesus Christ," says the exquisite genius, Herder, "is in the noblest, and most perfect sense, the realized ideal of humanity."

No one will accuse the first Napoleon of being either a pietist or weak-minded. He strode the world in his day like a Colossus, a man of gigantic intellect, however worthless and depraved in moral sense. Conversing one day, at St. Helena, as his custom was, about the great men of antiquity, and comparing himself with them, he suddenly turned round to one of his suite and asked him, "Can you tell me who Jesus Christ was?" The officer owned that he had not yet taken much thought of such things. "Well, then," said Napoleon, "I will tell you." He then compared Christ with himself, and with the heroes of antiquity, and showed how Jesus far surpassed them. "I think I understand somewhat of human nature," he continued, "and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man, but not one is like Him; Jesus Christ was more than man. Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded great empires; but upon what did the creations of our genius depend? Upon force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this very day millions would die for Him." "The Gospel is no mere book," said he at another

time, "but a living creature, with a vigour, a power, which conquers all that opposes it. Here lies the Book of Books upon the table [touching it reverently]; I do not tire of reading it, and do so daily with equal pleasure. The soul, charmed with the beauty of the Gospel, is no longer its own: God possesses it entirely: He directs its thoughts and faculties; it is His. What a proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ! Yet in this absolute sovereignty He has but one aim —the spiritual perfection of the individual, the purification of his conscience, his union with what is true, the salvation of his soul. Men wonder at the conquests of Alexander, but here is a conqueror who draws men to Himself for their highest good; who unites to Himself, incorporates into Himself, not a nation, but the whole human race!"

I might multiply such testimonies from men of all ages and classes, indefinitely; let me give only one or two more.

Among all the Biblical critics of Germany, no one has risen with an intellect more piercing, a learning more vast, and a freedom and fearlessness more unquestioned, than De Wette. Yet, listen to a sentence from the preface to his Commentary on the Book of Revelation, published just before his death, in 1849: "This only I know, that there is salvation in no other name than in the name of Jesus Christ, the Crucified, and that nothing loftier offers itself to humanity than the God-manhood realized in Him, and the kingdom of God which He founded—an idea and problem not yet rightly understood and incorporated into the life, even of those who, in other respects, justly rank as the most zealous and the warmest Christians! Were Christ in deed and in truth our Life, how could such a falling away from Him be possible? Those in whom He lived would witness so mightily for Him, through their whole life, whether spoken, written, or acted, that unbelief would be forced to silence."

Nor is the incidental testimony to Christ of those who have openly acknowledged their supreme devotion to Him less striking. There have been martyrs to many creeds, but what religion ever saw an army of martyrs willingly dying for the personal love they bore to the founder of their faith? Yet this has always been the characteristic of the martyrs of Christianity, from the days when, as tradition tells us, Peter was led to crucifixion with the words ever on his lips, "None but Christ, none but Christ," or when the aged Polycarp,—about to be burned alive in the amphitheatre at Smyrna,—answered the governor, who sought to make him revile Christ—"Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong; and how can I now blaspheme my King who has saved me?" Nearly seventeen hundred years passed from the time when the early confessor died blessing God that he was counted worthy to have a share in the number of martyrs and in the cup of Christ; and a man of high culture and intellect lies dying, the native of an island peopled only by outside barbarians in the days of Polycarp. The at-

tendants, watching his last moments, see his lips move, and bending over him, catch the faint sounds, "Jesus, love!—Jesus, love!—the same thing,"—the last words uttered before he left them. It was the death-bed of Sir James Macintosh. Thus the character of Christ still retains the supreme charm by which it drew towards it the deepest affections of the heart in the earliest age of the Church; and such a character must claim, above all others, our reverent and thoughtful study.

If we attempt to discover what it is in the personal character of Jesus Christ, as shown in His life, that thus attracts such permanent admiration, it is not difficult to do so.

In an age when the ideal of the religious life was realized in the Baptist's withdrawing from men, and burying himself in the ascetic solitudes of the desert, Christ came, bringing religion into the haunts and homes and every-day life of men. For the mortifications of the hermit He substituted the labours of active benevolence; for the fears and gloom which shrank from men, He brought the light of a cheerful piety, which made every act of daily life religious. He found the domain of religion fenced off as something distinct from common duties, and He threw down the wall of separation, and consecrated the whole sweep of existence. He lived, a man amongst men, sharing alike their joys and their sorrows, dignifying the humblest details of life by making them subordinate to the single aim of His Father's glory. Henceforth the grand revolution was inaugurated, which taught that religion does not lie in selfish or morbid devotion to personal interests, whether in the desert or the temple, but in loving work and self-sacrifice for others.

The absolute unselfishness of Christ's character is, indeed, its unique charm. His own life is self-denial throughout, and He makes a similar spirit the test of all healthy religious life. It is He who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" who reminds us that life, like the wheat, yields fruit only by its own dying; who gave us the ideal of life in His own absolute self-oblivion. We feel instinctively that this Gospel of Love alone is divine, and that we cannot withhold our homage from the only perfectly Unselfish Life ever seen on earth.

There is much, besides, to which I can only allude in a word. He demands repentance from all, but never for a moment hints at any need of it for Himself. With all His matchless lowliness, He advances personal claims which, in a mere man, would be the very delirium of religious pride. He was divinely patient under every form of suffering,—a homeless life, hunger and thirst, craft and violence, meanness and pride, the taunts of enemies and betrayals of friends, ending in an ignominious death. Nothing of all this for a moment turned Him from His chosen path of love and pity. His last words, like His whole life, were a prayer for those who returned Him evil for good. His absolute superiority to everything narrow or

local, so that He, a Jew, founds a religion in which all mankind are a common brotherhood, equal before God; the dignity, calmness, and self-possession before rulers, priests, and governors, which sets Him immeasurably above them; His freedom from superstition, in an age which was superstitious almost beyond example; His superiority to the merely external and ritual, in an age when rites and externals were the sum of religion: all these considerations, to mention no others, explain the mysterious attraction of His character, even when looked at only as that of an ideal Man.

When, from His character, we turn to His teachings, the claims of His Life on our reverent study are still further strengthened. To Him we owe the expansion of whatever was vital in Ancient Judaism from the creed of a tribe into a religion for the world. The Old Testament reveals a sublime and touching description of God as the Creator and the All-wise and Almighty Ruler of all things; as the God, in whose hand is the life of every living thing and the breadth of all mankind; the God of Providence, on whom the eyes of all creatures wait, and who gives them their meat in due season; as a Being of infinite majesty, who will by no means clear the guilty, but yet is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: as keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and as pitying them that fear Him, like as a father pitieth his children. But it was reserved for Christ to bring the character of God, as a God of Love, into full noon-day light, in His so loving the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have eternal life. In the New Testament He is first called Our Father in Heaven—the Father of all mankind. The Old Testament proclaimed Him the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Portion of Israel: Christ points the eyes of all nations to Him as the God of the whole human race.

The fundamental principles of Christianity are as new and as sublime as this grand conception of God, and spring directly from it. The highest ideal of man must ever be, and his soul reflects the image of his Creator, and this image can only be that of pure, all-embracing love, to God and man, for God is love. Outward service, alone, is of no value: the pure heart, only, loves aright: it, only, reflects the divine likeness; for purity and love are the same in the Eternal. A religion resting on such a basis bears the seal of heaven. But this divine law constitutes Christianity.

The morality taught by Christ is in keeping with such fundamental demands. Since love is the fulfilling of the law, there can be no limitation to duty but that of power. It can only be bounded by our possibilities of performance, and that not in the letter, but in spirit and in truth, both towards God and our neighbour. The perfect holiness of God can alone be the standard of our aspiration; for love means obedience, and God cannot look upon sin. To be a perfect Christian

is to be a sinless man—sinless through the obedience of perfect love. Such a morality has the seal of the living God on its forehead.

It is to be remembered, in realizing our obligations to Christ, that there was a perfect novelty in this teaching. Antiquity, outside the Jewish world, had no conception of what we call sin. There is no word in Greek for what we mean by it: the expression for it is synonymous with physical evil. There was either no guilt in an action, or the deity was to blame, or the action was irresistible. Priests and people had no aim or desire in sacrifices, prayers, or festivals, beyond the removal of a defilement, not considered as a moral, but a physical stain; and they attributed a magical effect to propitiatory rites through which they thought to obtain that removal; this effect being sure to follow if there were no omission in the rite, even though the will remained consciously inclined to evil!

The Roman was as free from having any conception of sin as the Greek. Even such moralists as Seneca had only a blind spiritual pride which confounded God and nature, and regarded man—the crown of nature and its most perfect work—as God's equal, or even as His superior, for the divine nature, in his creed, reaches perfection in man only. Every man, he tells us, carries God about with him in his bosom; in one aspect of his being he is God—virtue is only the following nature, and men's vices are only madness.

Compare with this the vision of God—high and lifted up—of awful holiness but of infinite love,—and the doctrine of human responsibility, which the heart itself re-echoes—as taught by Christ; and the study of His life becomes the loftiest of human duties.

We owe it no less to Christ that the belief in a future life, with its light or shadow depending on a future judgment, is now part of the creed of the world. Judaism, indeed, in its later ages at least, knew these revelations, but Judaism could never have become the religion of mankind. Pagan antiquity had ceased to have any fixed ideas of anything beyond this life. Immortality was an open question; the dream of poets rather than the common faith. But Christ brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

Doctrines such as these, illustrated by such a Life, and crowned by a death which He Himself proclaimed to be a voluntary offering "for the life of the world," could not fail to have a mighty influence.

The leaven thus cast into the mass of humanity has already largely transformed society, and is destined to affect it for good in ever-increasing measure, in all directions. The one grand doctrine of the Brotherhood of Man, as man, is in itself the pledge of infinite results. The seminal principle of all true progress must ever be found in a proper sense of the inherent dignity of manhood; in the realization of the truth that the whole human race are essentially equal in their faculties, nature, and inalienable rights. Such an idea was unknown to antiquity. The JEW, speaking in the Fourth Book of Esdras, addressed God—"On our account Thou hast created the world. Other

nations, sprung from Adam, Thou hast said are nothing, and are like spittle, and Thou hast likened their multitude to the droppings from a cask. But we are Thy people, whom Thou hast called Thy first-born, Thine only-begotten, Thy well-beloved." In the Book Sifri, the Rabbis tell us—"A single Israelite is of more worth in the sight of God than all the nations of the world; every Israelite is of more value before Him than all the nations who have been or will be."

To the GREEK, the word "humanity," as a term for the wide brotherhood of all races, was unknown. All races, except his own, were regarded and despised as "barbarians." Even the Egyptians, in spite of their ancient traditions and priestly "wisdom,"—the Carthaginians, the Phœnicians, Etruscans, Macedonians, and Romans, not to mention outlying and uncivilized peoples, were stigmatized by this contemptuous name. The Greek fancied himself appointed by the gods to be lord over all other races; and Socrates only gave expression to the general feeling of his countrymen when he thanked the gods daily for being man and not beast, male and not female, Greek and not barbarian.

The ROMAN, in common with antiquity at large, considered all who did not belong to his own State, as *hostes*, or enemies; and hence, unless there were a special league, all Romans held that the only law between them and those who were not Romans was that of the stronger, by which they were entitled to subjugate such races if they could, plunder their possessions, and make the people slaves. The fact that a tribe lived on the bank of a river on the other side of which Romans had settled, made its members "rivals," for the word means simply the dwellers on opposite sides of a stream. It was even objected to Christianity, indeed, that its folly was patent, from its seeking to introduce one religion for all races. "The man," says Celsus, "who can believe it possible for Greeks and Barbarians, in Asia, Europe, and Libya, to agree in one code of religious laws, must be utterly devoid of sense." Antiquity had no conception of a religion which, by readily uniting with everything purely human, and as readily attacking all forms of evil, could be destined or suited to the wants of all humanity. Nor did it deign to think that the aristocracy of the race could stoop to have a religion in common with the barbarian to whom it almost refused the name of man.

It was left to Christ to proclaim the brotherhood of all nations by revealing God as their common Father in Heaven, filled towards them with a father's love; by His commission to preach the Gospel to all; by His inviting all, without distinction, who laboured and were heavy laden, to come to Him, as the Saviour sent from God, for rest; by His receiving the woman of Samaria and her of Canaan as graciously as any others; by His making Himself the friend of publicans and sinners; by the tone of such parables as that of Dives and Lazarus; by His equal sympathy with the slave, the beggar, and the ruler; by the whole bearing and spirit of His life; and, above all,

by His picture of all nations gathered to judgment at the Great Day, with no distinction of race or rank, but simply as men.

In this great principle of the essential equality of man, and his responsibility to God, the germs lay hid of grand truths imperfectly realized even yet.

Thus, it is to this we owe the conception of the rights of individual conscience as opposed to any outward authority. There was no dream of such a thing before Christ came. The play of individuality, which alone secures and exemplifies those rights, was unknown or restricted. Among the Greeks, the will of the State was enforced on the individual. Morality and goodness were limited to what was voted by the majority as expedient for the well-being of the community at large. When a man had paid the gods the traditional sacrifices and ceremonies, he had little more to do with them. Not only could he not act for himself freely in social or private affairs; his conscience had no liberty. The State was everything, the man nothing. Rome knew as little of responsibility to higher laws than its own, and had very limited ideas even of personal freedom. Christ's words, "One is your 'Teacher,' and all ye are brethren;" "One is your 'Father,' even the Heavenly;" "One is your 'Guide,' even the Christ," were the inauguration of a social and moral revolution.

The SLAVE, before Christ came, was a piece of property of less worth than land or cattle. An old Roman law enacted a penalty of death for him who killed a ploughing ox; but the murderer of a slave was called to no account whatever. Crassus, after the revolt of Spartacus, crucified 10,000 slaves at one time. Augustus, in violation of his word, delivered to their masters, for execution, 30,000 slaves, who had fought for Sextus Pompeius. Trajan, the best of the Romans of his day, made 10,000 slaves fight at one time in the amphitheatre, for the amusement of the people, and prolonged the massacre 123 days.

The great truth of man's universal brotherhood was the axe laid at the root of this detestable crime—the sum of all villanies. By first infusing kindness into the lot of the slave, then by slowly undermining slavery itself, each century has seen some advance, till at last the man-owner is unknown in nearly every civilized country, and even Africa itself, the worst victim of slavery in these later ages, is being aided by Christian England to raise its slaves into freemen.

AGGRESSIVE WAR is no less distinctly denounced by Christianity, which, in teaching the brotherhood of man, proclaims war a revolt, abhorrent to nature, of brothers against brothers. The voice of Christ, commanding peace on earth, has echoed through all the centuries since His day, and has been at least so far honoured that the horrors of war are greatly lessened, and that war itself—no longer the rule, but the exception—is much rarer in Christian nations than in former times.

The POOR, in antiquity, were in almost as bad a plight as the slave.

'How can you possibly let yourself down so low as not to repel a poor man from you with scorn?" is the question of a rhetorician of the imperial times of Rome, to a rich man. No one of the thousands of rich men living in Rome ever conceived the notion of founding an asylum for the poor, or a hospital for the sick. There were herds of beggars. Seneca often mentions them, and observes that most men fling an alms to a beggar with repugnance, and carefully avoid all contact with him. Among the Jews, the poor were thought to be justly bearing the penalty of some sin of their own, or of their fathers. But we know the sayings of Christ—"It is more blessed to give than to receive:" "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me:" "Give to the poor." The abject and forlorn received a charter of human rights when He proclaimed that all men are brethren: sprung from the same human stock; sons of the same Almighty Father; one family in Himself, the Head of regenerated humanity.

The condition of WOMAN in antiquity was little better than that of the slave. She was the property of her husband, if married; if unmarried, she was the plaything or slave of man, never his equal. The morality of married life, which is the strength and glory of any people, was hardly known. Pompey and Germanicus were singular in the fidelity that marked their marriage-relations, on both sides, and were famous through the singularity. The utter impurity of the men reacted in a similar self-degradation of the other sex. In Rome, marriages became, as a rule, mere temporary connections. In order to escape the punishments inflicted on adultery, in the time of Tiberius, married women, including even women of illustrious families, enrolled themselves on the official lists of public prostitutes. St. Paul only spoke the language which every one who knows the state of morals of those days must use, when he wrote the well-known verses in the opening of his Epistle to the Romans. The barbarians of the German forests alone, of the heathen world, retained a worthy sense of the true dignity of woman. "No one there laughs at vice," says Tacitus, "nor is to seduce and to be seduced called the fashion." "Happy indeed," continues the Roman, thinking of the state of things around him, "those states in which only virgins marry, and where the vow and heart of the bride go together!" "Infidelity is very rare among them." The traditions of a purer time still lingered beyond the Alps; the afterglow of light that had set elsewhere.

These traditions, thus honoured in the forests of Germany, were formulated into a supreme law for all ages and countries by Jesus Christ. Except for one crime, husband and wife, joined by God in marriage, were not to be put asunder. Woman was no longer to be the toy and inferior of man. Polygamy, the fruitful source of social corruption, was forbidden. Man and woman were to meet on equal

terms in lifelong union: each honouring the other, and both training their children amidst the sanctities of a pure family life.

The enforcement of these and kindred teachings, destined to regenerate humanity, required lofty sanctions. That these are not wanting, in the amplest fulness, we have in part seen already, and shall see more and more as we advance. Meanwhile, enough has been said to show why, even apart from the mysterious dignity of His divine nature, God manifest in the flesh, and even independently of His being the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, Christ's life and sayings, alike unique among men, deserve the reverent study of all.

"From first to last," said the great Napoleon, on one occasion, "Jesus is the same; always the same—majestic and simple, infinitely severe and infinitely gentle. Throughout a life passed under the public eye, He never gives occasion to find fault. The prudence of His conduct compels our admiration by its union of force and gentleness. Alike in speech and action, He is enlightened, consistent, and calm. Sublimity is said to be an attribute of divinity: what name, then, shall we give Him in whose character were united every element of the sublime?

"I know men; and I tell you that Jesus is not a man. Everything in Him amazes me. His spirit outreaches mine, and His will confounds me. Comparison is impossible between Him and any other being in the world. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and His sentiments; the truth that He announces; His manner of convincing; are all beyond humanity and the natural order of things.

"His birth, and the story of His life; the profoundness of His doctrine, which overturns all difficulties, and is their most complete solution; His Gospel; the singularity of His mysterious being; His appearance; His empire; His progress through all centuries and kingdoms;—all this is to me a prodigy, an unfathomable mystery.

"I see nothing here of man. Near as I may approach, closely as I may examine, all remains above my comprehension—great with a greatness that crushes me. It is in vain that I reflect—all remains unaccountable!

"I defy you to cite another life like that of Christ."

CHAPTER II.

THE HOLY LAND.

The contrast between the influences which have most affected the world, and the centres from which they have sprung, is very striking. Greece, the mother of philosophy and art, for all time, is not quite half the size of Scotland; Rome, the mighty mistress of the world, was only a city of Italy; Palestine, the birthplace of our Lord, and the cradle of revelation, is about the size of Wales. From Dan, on the north, to Beersheba, on the south, is a distance of only 139 miles, and the paltry breadth of twenty miles, from the coast to the Jordan; on the north, increases slowly to only forty between the shore of the Mediterranean, at Gaza, and the Dead Sea, on the south.

When it is remembered that America was unknown till within the last four centuries, the position of Palestine on the map of the ancient world was very remarkable. It seemed the very centre of the earth, and went far to excuse the long-prevailing belief that Jerusalem was the precise central point. On the extreme western limit of Asia, it looked eastward, towards the great empires and religions of that mighty continent, and westward, over the Mediterranean, to the promise of European civilization. It was the connecting link between Europe and Africa, which could then boast of Egypt as one of the great centres of human thought and culture; and it had the dateless past of the East for its background.

Yet its position towards other lands was not less striking than its real or apparent isolation. Separated from Asia by the broad and impassable desert, it was saved from becoming a purely Eastern country, either in religion, or in the political decay and retrogression which have, sooner or later, marked all Eastern States. Shut in, by a strip of desert, from Egypt, it was kept, in great part, from the contagion of the gross morality and grosser idolatry of that land; and its western coasts were washed by the "Great Sea," which, for ages, was as much a mystery to the Jew, as the Atlantic to our ancestors, before the era of Columbus. There could have been no land in which the purpose of God to "separate" a nation "from among all the people of the earth," to be the depositary of divine truth, and the future missionaries of the world, could have been so perfectly carried out. Nor did its special fitness as a centre of heavenly light amongst mankind pass away till the whole scheme of revelation had been completed; for by the time of Christ's death the Mediterranean had become the highway of the nations, and facilitated the diffusion of the Gospel to the cities and nations of the populous West, by the easy path of its wide waters. The long seclusion of ages had already

trained the Jew in religious knowledge, when forced or voluntary dispersion sent him abroad to all lands, with his lofty creed: the passing away of that seclusion opened the world to the ready dissemination of the message of the Cross.

It is an additional peculiarity of the Holy Land, in relation to the history of religion, that its physical features, and its position, together, brought it, from the earliest ages, in contact with the widest range of peoples and empires. Egypt and it are two oases in wide-spreading deserts, and as such attracted race after race. Vast migrations of northern tribes towards the richer southern countries have marked all ages; and Egypt, as the type of fertility, was a special land of wonder, to which these wandering populations ever turned greedy eyes. In a less degree, the Holy Land shared this dangerous admiration. It was the next link to Egypt in the chain of attractive conquests—Egypt itself being the last. As in later times the Assyrian, the Chaldean, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, and the Turk successively coveted the valley of the Nile, and took possession of it, so in the very earliest ages, as many indications prove, wave after wave of immigration had overflowed it. In all these inroads of new nationalities, the Holy Land, as the highway to Egypt, necessarily shared, and hence, as centuries passed, race after race was brought in contact with the Jew, in spite of his isolation, and the Jew into contact with them. Such a fact was of great significance in the religious education of the world. It leavened widely distant nations, more or less, with the grand religious truths which had been committed to the keeping of the Jew alone; it led or forced him abroad to distant regions, to learn, as well as to communicate; and it reacted to ensure the intense religious conservatism to which the Jew, even to-day, owes his continued national existence. That was a fitting scene, moreover, for the advent of the Saviour of the world, in which, small though its bounds, He was surrounded not by the Jew alone, but by a population representing a wide proportion of the tribes and nations of the then-known earth. The inscription on the cross, in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, was the symbol of the relation of Christ's life, and of His death, to all humanity.

But perhaps the most striking peculiarity of Palestine as the spot chosen by God for His revelations of religious truth to our race, and for the incarnation of the Saviour of mankind, is that it presents within its narrow bounds the characteristics of climate and productions scattered elsewhere over all the habitable zones—from the snowy north to the tropics. The literature of a country necessarily takes the colour of its local scenery and external nature, and hence a book written in almost any land is unfitted for other countries in which life and nature are different. Thus the Korân, written in Arabia, is essentially an Eastern book, in great measure unintelligible and uninteresting to nations living in countries in any great degree different, in climate and modes of life, from Arabia itself. The

sacred books of other religions have had only a local reception. The Bible alone finds a welcome among nations of every region over the earth. It is the one book in the world which men everywhere receive with equal interest and reverence. The inhabitant of the coldest north finds, in its imagery, something that he can understand, and it is a household book in multitudes of homes in the sultriest regions of the south.

Intended to carry the Truth to all nations, it was essential that the Bible should have this cosmopolitan attractiveness. Yet it could not have had it but that such a country as Palestine was chosen to produce it. Within the narrow limits of that strip of coast, as we might call it, are gathered the features of countries the most widely apart. The peaks of Lebanon are never without patches of snow, even in the heat of summer. Snow falls nearly every winter along the summits of the central ridge of Palestine, and over the tableland east of the Jordan, though it seldom lies more than one or two days. On the other hand, in the valley of the Jordan, summer brings the heat of the tropics, and the different seasons, in different parts, according to the elevation, exhibit a regular gradation between these extremes. Thus, within the extent of a single landscape, there is every climate, from the cold of northern Europe to the heat of India. The oak, the pine, the walnut, the maple, the juniper, the alder, the poplar, the willow, the ash, the ivy, and the hawthorn, grow luxuriantly on the heights of Hermon, Bashan, and Galilee. Hence the traveller from the more northerly temperate lands finds himself, in some parts, surrounded by the trees and vegetation of his own country. He sees the apple, the pear, and the plum, and rejoices to meet the familiar wheat, and barley, and peas, and potatoes, and cabbage, carrots, lettuce, endive, and mustard. The Englishman is delighted to find himself surrounded by many of the flowers of his native land; for out of the 2,000 or 2,500 flowers of Palestine, perhaps 500 are British. It looks like home to see the ranunculus, the yellow water-lily, the tulip, the crocus, the hyacinth, the anemone, mignonette, geraniums, mallows, the common bramble, the dog-rose, the daisy, the well-known groundsel, the dandelion,—sage, and thyme, and sweet marjoram, blue and white pimpernel, cyclamens, vervain, mint, horehound, road-way nettles, and thistles; and ponds with the wonted water-cress, duck-weed, and rushes.

The traveller from more southern countries is no less at home; for from whatever part he come, be it sunny Spain or Western India, he will recognize well-known forms in one or other of such a list as the carob, the oleander and willow, skirting the streams and water-courses; the sycamore, the fig, the olive, the date-palm, the pride of India, the pistachio, the tamarisk, the acacia, and the tall tropical grasses and reeds; or in such fruits as the date, the pomegranate, the vine, the orange, the shaddock, the lime, the banana, the almond, and the prickly pear. The sight of fields of cotton, millet, rice,

sugar-cane, maize, or even of Indian indigo, and of patches of melons, gourds, pumpkins, tobacco, yam, sweet potato, and other southern or tropical field or garden crops, will carry him back in thought to his home.

There can be no more vivid illustration of the climate of any land than the vegetation it yields, and Palestine, tried by this test, reproduces climates and zones which, in other countries, are separated by many hundred miles.

A book written in such a land must necessarily be a reflection, in its imagery and modes of thought, so far as they are affected by external nature, of much that is common to men all over the earth. The Scriptures of the two Testaments have had this priceless help in their great mission, from Palestine having been chosen by God as the land in which they were written. The words of prophets and apostles, and of the great Master Himself, sound familiar to all mankind, because spoken amidst natural images and experiences common to all the world.

Though essentially a mountainous country, Palestine has many broad and fertile plains. It is a highland district, intersected throughout, and bordered on the western side, by rich, wide-spreading lowlands.

The plain on the western side extends from above Acre, with an interruption by Mount Carmel, along the whole coast, under the respective names of the plain of Acre, the plain of Sharon, and the Shefelah, or low country, the land of the Philistines in early ages. From this border plain the country rises, throughout, into a tableland of an average height of from 1,500 to 1,800 feet above the Mediterranean; the general level being so even, and the hills so close together, that the whole length of the country, seen from the coast, looks like a wall rising from the fertile plain at its foot. Yet the general monotony is broken, here and there, by higher elevations. Thus, to begin from the south, Hebron is 3,029 feet above the sea; Jerusalem 2,610; the Mount of Olives 2,724; Bethel 2,400; Ebal and Gerizim 2,700; Little Hermon and Tabor, on the north side of the plain of Esdraelon 1,900; Safed 2,775; and Jebel Jermuk 4,000.

This long sea of hills is full of valleys running east and west, which form so many arms of torrent beds, opening into the Jordan valley or the Mediterranean. These valleys, on the eastern side of the watershed, towards Jordan, are extremely steep and rugged; as, for instance, the precipitous descent between Mount Olivet and Jericho, which sinks over 4,000 feet in a distance of about fifteen miles. The great depression of the Jordan valley makes such rugged and difficult mountain gorges the only passes to the upper country from the east. There is not a spot, till the plain of Esdraelon joins the valley of the Jordan, open enough to manœuvre more than a small body of foot soldiers. The western valleys slope more gently, but, like the eastern, are the only means of communication with the plains, and

offer such difficulties as explain the security of Israel in ancient times, entrenched among hills which, at the best, could be reached only by rough mountain passes. The Jew lived, in fact, in a strong mountain fastness stretching like a long wall behind the plain beneath.

The appearance and fertility of this highland region, which, alone, was at any time the Holy Land of the Jews, varies in different parts. The southern district, below Hebron, is a gradual transition from the desert, from which it is approached in slow ascent. It was known in Bible times as the Negeb, or south country, and is an uninviting tract of barren uplands. As we pass north into the hills of Judah and Benjamin there is somewhat more fertility, but the landscape is monotonous, bare, and uninviting in the extreme, for most of the year. In spring, even the bald grey rocks which make up the view are covered with verdure and bright flowers, and the ravines are filled with torrents of rushing water, but in summer and autumn the look of the country from Hebron up to Bethel is very dreary and desolate. The flowers vanish with the first fierce rays of the summer sun: they are "to-day in the field, to-morrow cast into the oven." The little upland plains, which, with their green grass, and green corn, and smooth surface, relieve the monotony of the mountain-tops farther north, are not found in Judea, and are rare in Benjamin. The soil, alike on plain, hill, and glen, is poor and scanty. Natural wood disappears, and a few small bushes, brambles, or aromatic shrubs, alone appear on the hill-sides. "Rounded hills, chiefly of a grey colour," says Dean Stanley—"grey partly from the limestone of which they are formed, partly from the tufts of grey shrub with which their sides are thinly clothed—their sides formed into concentric rings of rock, which must have served in ancient times as supports to the terraces, of which there are still traces to the very summits; valleys, or rather the meetings of those grey slopes with the beds of dry watercourses at their feet—long sheets of bare rock laid like flagstones, side by side, along the soil—these are the chief features of the greater part of the scenery of the historical parts of Palestine. These rounded hills, occasionally stretching into long undulating ranges, are for the most part bare of wood. Forest and large timber are not known." Fountains are rare in this district; and wells, covered cisterns, and tanks cut out in the soft white limestone, take their place.

Such are the central and northern highlands of Judea. In the west and north-western parts, which the sea-breezes reach, the vegetation is more abundant. Olives abound, and give the country in some places almost a wooded appearance. The terebinth, with its dark foliage, is frequent, and near the site of Kirjath-jearim, "the city of forests," there are some thickets of pine and laurel.

But the eastern part of these hills—a tract nine or ten miles in width by about thirty-five in length—between the centre and the steep descent to the Dead Sea—is, and must always have been, in

the truest sense a desert. Van de Velde well describes it as a bare arid wilderness: an endless succession of shapeless yellow and ash-coloured hills, without grass or shrubs, without water, and almost without life. Another traveller speaks of it as a wilderness of mountain-tops, in some places tossed up like waves of mud, in others wrinkled over with ravines, like models made of crumpled brown paper, the nearer ones whitish, strewn with rocks and bushes. Such is the desert or wilderness of Judea, the scene of the earlier retirement of John the Baptist, and the popularly supposed scene of the Temptation of our Lord.

Though thus barren and uninviting as a whole, in our day, the universal presence of ruins proves that Judah and Benjamin had a teeming population in former ages. Terrace cultivation utilized the whole surface, where there was the least soil; and in such a climate, with an artificial supply of water, luxuriant fertility might be secured everywhere except on the bare rock. The destruction of these terraces has doubtless allowed much soil to be washed into the valleys, and lost, and the destruction of the natural forests of which there are still traces must have greatly diminished the supply of water. Even in the now utterly barren districts of "the south" abundant proofs have been discovered that cultivation was anciently extensive. The fact that there are no perennial streams in the western wadys, while there are many in those trending to the Jordan on both sides, where the forests or thick shrubberies of oleanders and other flowering trees still flourish, speaks volumes as to the cause of the present sterility.

Passing northward from Judea, the country gradually opens and is more inviting. Rich plains, at first small, but becoming larger as we get north, stretch out between the hills, till at last, near Nablous, we reach one a mile broad and six miles long. The valleys running west are long, winding, and mostly tillable: those on the east are less deep and abrupt than farther south, and, being abundantly watered by numerous fountains, are rich in orange groves and orchards. Nablous itself is surrounded by immense groves of olive-trees, planted on all the hills around. Nowhere in Palestine are there nobler brooks of water. The rich uplands produce abundant crops of grain when cultivated; yet it is, on the whole, a region specially adapted for olives, vineyards, and orchards. The mountains, though bare of wood, and but partially cultivated, have none of that arid, worn look of those of some parts farther south.

North-west of the city of Nablous the mountains gradually sink down into a wide plain, famous as that of Sharon, mostly an expanse of sloping downs, but dotted here and there with huge fields of corn and tracts of wood, recalling the county of Kent, and reaching to the southern slopes of Carmel, with their rich woods and park-like scenery.

Passing still northward, from Samaria to Galilee, another wide

plain of great fertility—that of Esdraelon—stretches out from the northern side of the luxuriant Carmel. It might, under a good government, yield vast crops, but the inhabitants are few and poor, and tillage is imperfect. The country now rapidly improves. Vegetation is much more luxuriant among the hills of Galilee than elsewhere west of the Jordan. Fountains are abundant and copious, and many of the torrent beds are never dry. The hills become more and more richly wooded with oaks and terebinths, while ravines occur here and there thickly clothed, in addition, with the maple, arbutus, sumach, and other trees. The hills of Judea are barren; those of Samaria have been well compared to the hilly districts of the south of Scotland; but those of Galilee are more like the rich hills of Surrey. Yet the whole region is thinly peopled. This highland paradise has far fewer inhabitants than even the bleak mountains of Judea, where "for miles and miles, there is often no appearance of life, except the occasional goat-herd on the hill-side, or the gathering of women at the wells."

The coast of the Holy Land, as has been said, is a long plain. This, on the north, is a mere strip, till near Acre, but it spreads out from that point into a flat, rich, loamy plain, at first only a few feet above the sea level. Corn-fields and pasture-lands reach several miles inland. South of Carmel it expands into the plain of Sharon, now left bare and parched in many parts; its ancient forests long ago destroyed, except in stray spots, and cultivation little known. As we go south, the soil is lighter and drier, and the vegetation scantier, till we reach the Shephelah, or "low country" of the Bible, the ancient Philistia, which begins in rolling downs, and passes into wide-spreading corn-fields and vast expanses of loamy soil to the far south.

The eastern boundary of Palestine is the deep chasm in which the Jordan has its channel. The name of that river indicates its course: it means "the descender." Rising in the mountains of Lebanon, it flows south, through the marshy Lake Merom and the Lake of Galilee, to the Dead Sea, in a course of about 150 miles. From the Lake of Galilee, its channel is a deep cleft in the mountain range, from north to south, and so broken is its current that it is one continued rapid. Its bed is so crooked that it has hardly half a mile straight; so deep, moreover, is it, below the surface of the adjacent country, that it can only be approached by descending one of the steep mountain valleys, and it is invisible till near its entrance into the Dead Sea, at a level of 1,317 feet below that of the Mediterranean. There is no town on its banks, and it has in all ages been crossed at the same fords; no use can be made of it for irrigation, and no vessel can sail the sea into which it pours its waters. It is like no other river.

CHAPTER III.

PALESTINE AT THE TIME OF CHRIST.

At the birth of Christ the striking spectacle presented itself, in a degree unknown before or since, of the world united under one sceptre. From the Euphrates to the Atlantic; from the mouths of the Rhine to the slopes of the Atlas, the Roman Emperor was the sole lord. The Mediterranean was, in the truest sense, a Roman lake. From the pillars of Hercules to the mouths of the Nile, on its southern shores; from the farthest coasts of Spain to Syria, on its northern; and thence round to the Nile again, the multitudes of men now divided into separate nations, often hostile, always distinct, reposed in peace under the shadow of the Roman eagles. There might be war on the far eastern frontier, beyond the Euphrates, or with the rude tribes in the German forests on the north, but the vast Roman world enjoyed the peace and security of a great organic whole. The merchant or the traveller might alike pass freely from land to land; trading vessels might bear their ventures to any port, for all lands and all coasts were under the same laws, and all mankind, for the time, were citizens of a common State.

At the head of this stupendous empire a single man, Octavianus Cæsar—now better known by his imposing title, Augustus—ruled as absolute lord. All nations bowed before him, all kingdoms served him. It is impossible for us, in the altered condition of things, to realize adequately the majesty of such a position. Rome, itself, the capital of this unique empire, was itself unique in those ages. Its population, with its suburbs, has been variously estimated; some writers, as Lepsius, supposing it to have been eight millions, others, like De Quincey, setting it down as not less than four millions at the very least, and not impossibly half as many more. On the other hand, Merivale gives it as only half-a-million, while others make it two millions and a half. Gibbon estimates it at twelve hundred thousand, and is supported in his supposition by Dean Milman. The truth lies probably between the extremes. But the unique grandeur of Rome was independent of any question as to its size or population; the fact that arrested all minds was rather that a mere city should be the resistless mistress of the habitable world.

Round the office and person of the Cæsar, who only, of all rulers, before or since, was in the widest sense a *monarch* of the whole race of men,—that is, one ruling alone, over all nations,—there necessarily gathered peculiar and incommunicable attributes of grandeur. Like the far-stretching highways which rayed out from the golden milestone in the Roman Forum to the utmost frontiers, the illimitable majesty of the Emperor extended to all lands. On the shadowy,

resistless, uncertain, but ever-advancing frontiers of a dominion which embraced almost the whole habitable world, as then known, the commands issued from the imperial city were as resistless as in Italy. There were, doubtless, some unknown or despised empires or tribes outside the vast circumference of the Roman sway, but they were regarded, at the best, as Britain looks on the wandering hordes or barbarous and powerless empires beyond the limits of her Indian possessions. Gibbon has set the grandeur of Rome in a vivid light, by describing the position of a subject who should attempt to flee from the wrath of a Cæsar. "The empire of the Romans," says he, "filled the world, and when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the Senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or on the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive. 'Wherever you are,' said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, 'remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror.'"

At the birth of Christ this amazing federation of the world into one great monarchy had been finally achieved. Augustus, at Rome, was the sole power to which all nations looked. His throne, like the "exceeding high mountain" of the Temptation, showed "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory," spread out around it far beneath, as the earth lies in the light of the sun. No prince, no king, or potentate of any name could break the calm which such a universal dominion secured—"a calm," to use De Quincey's figure, "which, through centuries, continued to lave, as with the quiet undulations of summer lakes, the sacred footsteps of the Cæsarean throne."

It was in such a unique era that Jesus Christ was born. The whole earth lay hushed in profound peace. All lands lay freely open to the message of mercy and love which He came to announce.

Nor was the social and moral condition of the world at large, at the birth of Christ, less fitting for His advent than the political. The prize of universal power, struggled for through sixty years of plots and desolating civil wars, had been won at last, by Augustus. Sulla and Marius, Pompey and Cæsar, had led their legions against each other, alike in Italy and the Provinces, and had drenched the earth with blood. Augustus himself had reached the throne only after thirteen years of war, which involved regions wide apart. The world was

exhausted by the prolonged agony of such a strife; it sighed for repose, and perhaps never felt a more universal joy than when the closing of the Temple of Janus in the twenty-ninth year before Christ announced that at last the earth was at peace.

The religions of antiquity had lost their vitality, and become effete forms, without influence on the heart. Philosophy was the consolation of a few—the amusement or fashion of others; but of no weight as a moral force among men at large. On its best side, that of Stoicism, it had much that was lofty, but its highest teaching was resignation to fate, and it offered only the hurtful consolation of pride in virtue, without an idea of humiliation for vice. On its worst side—that of Epicureanism—it exalted self-indulgence as the highest end. Faith in the great truths of natural religion was well-nigh extinct. Sixty-three years before the birth of Christ, Julius Cæsar, at that time the Chief Pontiff of Rome, and, as such, the highest functionary of the state religion, and the official authority in religious questions, openly proclaimed, in his speech in the Senate, in reference to Catiline and his fellow-conspirators—that there was no such thing as a future life; no immortality of the soul. He opposed the execution of the accused on the ground that their crimes deserved the severest punishments, and that, therefore, they should be kept alive to endure them, since death was in reality an escape from suffering, not an evil. "Death," said he, "is a rest from troubles to those in grief and misery, not a punishment; it ends all the evils of life; for there is neither care nor joy beyond it."

Nor was there any one to condemn such a sentiment even from such lips. Cato, the ideal Roman, a man whose aim it was to "fulfil all righteousness," in the sense in which he understood it, passed it over with a few words of light banter; and Cicero, who was also present, did not care to give either assent or dissent, but left the question open, as one which might be decided either way, at pleasure.

Morality was entirely divorced from religion, as may be readily judged by the fact, that the most licentious rites had their temples, and male and female ministrants. In Juvenal's words, "the Syrian Orontes had flowed into the Tiber," and it brought with it the appalling immorality of the East. Doubtless, here and there, throughout the empire, the light of holy traditions still burned on the altars of many a household; but it availed nothing against the thick moral night that had settled over the earth at large. The advent of Christ was the breaking of the "dayspring from on high" through a gloom that had been gathering for ages; a great light dawning on a world which lay in darkness, and in the shadow of death.

To understand the condition of things in the Holy Land in the life time of Jesus, it is necessary to notice the history of the reign that was closing at His birth, for religious and political affairs acted and reacted on the spirit of the nation as only two phases of the same thing.

The reign of Alexander Jannæus, of the Maccabæan or Asmonean line, had been marked by the bitterest persecutions of the Pharisaic party, whose insolence and arrogant claims had caused the king to throw himself into the hands of their Sadducean rivals. After his death these disputes continued under Queen Alexandra, who favoured the Pharisees, but the disquiet culminated, after her death, in the far worse evil of a civil war between her two sons, the elder, Hyrcanus, a weak, indolent man; the younger, Aristobulus, on the other hand, bold and energetic. Hyrcanus had been made high priest, and Aristobulus had been kept from all power during Alexandra's life—the Pharisaic party themselves holding the reins of government; but she was hardly dead before Aristobulus forced his brother to resign the throne, to which he had succeeded, and left him only the high priesthood. Hyrcanus would, apparently, have quietly acquiesced in this change, but the evil genius of Aristobulus and of the nation was present in the person of an influential Edomite, Antipater, who had gained the confidence of Hyrcanus. Stirred up by this crafty intriguer, the elder brother re-claimed the throne—Arab allies were called in—Jerusalem was besieged, and both the brothers appealed to the Roman generals in Syria for a decision between them. As the result, Pompey, then commanding in the East, appeared on the scene, in the year 63 B.C.; got possession of the country by craft; stormed the Temple, which held out for Aristobulus, and inaugurated a new era in Palestine. The Pharisees had hoped that both of the brothers would be put aside, and the theocracy, which meant their own rule, restored; but Pompey, while withholding the name of king, set up Hyrcanus as high priest and ruler, under the title of ethnarch. All the conquests of the Maccabæans were taken from him: the country was re-distributed in arbitrary political divisions; the defences of Jerusalem thrown down, and the nation subjected to tribute to Rome. This itself would have been enough to kindle a deep hatred to their new masters, but the seeds of a still more profound enmity were sown, even at this first step in Roman occupation, by Pompey and his staff insisting on entering the Holy of Holies, and thus committing what seemed to the Jew the direst profanation of his religion.

Antipater had allied himself from the first with Rome, as the strongest, and was now the object of furious hatred. The nation had supposed that Pompey came as a friend, to heal their dissensions, but found that he remained as their master. Their independence was lost, and Antipater had been the cause of its ruin. It is perhaps of him that the author of the Psalms of Solomon speaks when he says, "Why sittest thou, the unclean one, in the Sanhedrim, and thy heart is far from the Lord, and thou stirrest up with thy sins the God of Israel?" Treachery, hypocrisy, adultery, and murder are charged against him, and he is compared to a biting serpent. Yet the guilt of the people, it is owned, had brought these calamities on them. Through this, the ram had battered the holy walls, the Holy of Holies

had been profaned, the noblest of the Sanhedrim slain, and their sons and daughters carried off captive to the West, to grace Pompey's triumph. At the thought of this the Psalmist is still more cast down, and humbles himself in the dust before the retributive hand of Jehovah.

But there was no peace for Israel. War lingered on the southern borders, and in B.C. 57 Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, once more overthrew the government of Hyrcanus and Antipater, but the Romans forthwith came in force, and crushed the revolt by another conquest of Jerusalem. In this campaign a cavalry colonel, Mark Antony, so especially distinguished himself, that the keen-sighted Antipater, seeing he had a great future, formed friendly relations with him, which led to the weightiest results in later years.

Hyrcanus and his favourite were now again in power, but they had a troubled life. The people rose again and again, only to be as constantly crushed. In B.C. 56 Aristobulus, who had escaped from Rome, began the war once more, and the next year, his son Alexander made another vain revolt. In B.C. 52, when the Parthians had revenged themselves by the destruction of the legions of Crassus—who, in time of peace, had plundered the Temple to fill his own treasures—the Jews rose still once more, but Cassius, who had escaped with the wreck of the army of Crassus from the Parthian horsemen, soon crushed the insurrection, and Antipater emerged as, at last, the unfettered lord of the country.

The civil war which broke out, in the year 49, between Pompey and Cæsar, for a time promised a change. Judea, like all the East, adhered to Pompey, and Cæsar therefore set the imprisoned Aristobulus free, and gave him two legions to clear his native country of the adherents of his rival. Antipater and Hyrcanus already trembled at the thought of a popular revolt, supported by Rome, when news came that Aristobulus had suddenly died—no doubt of poison—and that his son Alexander had been beheaded, in Antioch, by Pompey's orders. Antipater had thus managed to get his enemies out of the way. When Pompey's cause was finally crushed, next year, at Pharsalia, Hyrcanus and Antipater, like the princes round them, were in a false position. Six weeks later, Pompey lay murdered on the Egyptian sands. Meanwhile, Cæsar, who had landed in Egypt, at the head of hardly 4,000 men, to settle the disputes for the throne of that country, was attacked by the native soldiery and the restless population of Alexandria, and reduced to the most desperate straits. At this moment a motley army of Eastern vassals came to his relief, anxious to efface at the earliest opportunity the remembrance of their relations to Pompey. It included hordes of Arabs from Damascus, and bands of Iturcans from beyond Jordan, but its strength lay in 3,000 chosen troops brought by Antipater. The strange host was nominally commanded by Mithridates of Pergamos, a bastard of the great Mithridates, but Antipater was the real head.

He induced the Bedouin leaders on the opposite side to withdraw, and persuaded the Egyptian Jews to supply Cæsar with provisions. After fierce fighting, the Roman fortune triumphed, and Cæsar, now enamoured of Cleopatra, then one-and-twenty years of age, remained conqueror. Alexandria was heavily punished: the Egyptian Jews received extensive privileges, but the affairs of Palestine were left to be settled when Cæsar came back from Pontus, in Asia Minor, to which he had been summoned to repel an invasion from Armenia.

On his return to Syria, in the autumn of the year 47, Antipater hastened to meet him, as did also Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus. But the wounds of Antipater, received in rescuing Cæsar from destruction, weighed more than the hereditary claims of Antigonus, who, feeling this, fled to the Parthians, to seek the aid which Rome refused. In other respects, the Jews were treated in the friendliest way. Those of Lesser Asia were confirmed in the privilege of unchecked remittance of their Temple contributions to Jerusalem. Their synagogues were put under the protection of the Temple laws, and they were once more granted immunity from all demands for public service on the Sabbath, and on the preparation-day, from the sixth hour. In Palestine, Hyrcanus was sanctioned as high priest; the five divisions of the land previously made were put aside, and the whole united under Antipater, as procurator. The Jews in all the towns of Syria and Phenicia were put on the same favoured footing as those of the Holy Land itself. No troops were to be raised in Judea, nor any Roman garrisons introduced. The Temple tax and the Roman dues were regulated according to Jewish usage. Hyrcanus, as high priest, received the rank of a Roman senator, and was made hereditary ethnarch, with the right of life and death, and of legal decision on all questions of ritual. Still more, the right was granted to fortify Jerusalem again, and Antipater, for his own reward, was made a Roman citizen, with freedom from taxes on his property. The Idumean dynasty may be said to have begun from this date, as the procuratorship granted to Antipater made him henceforth independent of Hyrcanus. All these concessions he took care to have forthwith confirmed at Rome, and graven on plates of brass.

These diplomatic successes, however, failed to make Antipater popular. He assumed some of the public duties of Hyrcanus, to show the Sanhedrim that the civil power had been rightly transferred from the incapable hands of the high priest. But the suspicion sank ever deeper in the popular mind, that the final setting aside of the Maccabæan family was designed, and it was even said that the Essene Menahem had told Herod, Antipater's son, years before, as he met him on the street, that he would grow up to be the scourge of the Maccabæans, and would in the end wear the crown of David. Yet Hyrcanus could not shake himself free, even had he had the energy to do so, for he needed the help of the alien to protect him

against his own family. His daughter Alexandra had lost, on his account, both husband and father-in-law, by foul or legal murder. His nephew, Antigonus, lived in a foreign land as a claimant of the throne; his grand-children were the orphans of Alexander, who had fallen under the axe of the headsman. The house of the Idumean, the alien in Israel, was nearer to him than his own flesh and blood.

Antipater, in accordance with the tradition of his house, had married a daughter of the Bedouins—the fair Kypros—to preserve the connection with the sheikhs of the desert by which his father had grown rich. She bore him four sons, Phasael, Herod, Joseph, and Pheroras, and a daughter, Salome. Of these, Antipater, as ruler of the country, named Phasael governor of Jerusalem, and Herod—a young man of twenty-five—he sent to Galilee, to put down the bands of desparadoes, who thickly infested it, half robbers, half religious zealots, fighting against the hated Romans. Herod was well qualified to maintain the honour of his house. He was a fearless rider, and no one threw the spear so straight to the mark, or shot his arrow so constantly into the centre. Even in later years, when strength and agility begin to fail in most, he was known to have killed forty wild beasts in one day's hunting. Herod took prisoner Hezekiah, the dreaded leader of the "robbers," and his whole band, and put them all to death. But his success only enraged the patriots of Jerusalem. In violation of the right put exclusively into the hands of Hyrcanus, as high priest, by Cæsar, he had slain free Jews—and these, men fighting for the Law, and against the heathen intruders into the heritage of Jehovah; and the Sanhedrim—the high council—forced their nominal leader, whose legal prerogative had been thus invaded, to summon the offender before them. Herod obeyed, after having made Galilee safe, but appeared with a powerful escort; and at the same time, a message was sent by the proconsul of Syria not to injure him. He would, however, have been sentenced to death, had not Hyrcanus left the chair, and counselled his young friend to leave Jerusalem. Gnashing his teeth, Herod rode off to Damascus, to the proconsul, from whom he shortly after bought the governorship of Cœle-Syria and Samaria, for which, as a Roman citizen, he was qualified, returning soon after, with a strong force to Jerusalem, to avenge the insult offered him. But, at the entreaty of his father, whom his boldness confirmed in authority, he withdrew, without violence.

All Palestine was now in the hands of Herod's house, for Antipater ruled Judea, and Herod himself was over Samaria and Cœle-Syria. The Roman generals were uncertain whom to follow. Cæsar's fortunes seemed waning in Africa. Bassus, one of Pompey's party, seized Tyre, and sought to seduce the soldiers of Sextus Cæsar, the Syrian proconsul. Antipater sent a mixed force, and Herod led the cavalry of Samaria, to the proconsul's help. Bassus was beaten, but Sextus Cæsar himself was murdered by his own soldiers, and for two

years Phasael and Herod had to maintain a difficult war. At last, in the year 44, the news came, when all were expecting Cæsar in the East, that he was murdered. The schemes of Herod's family seemed ruined.

Things, however, soon righted themselves. Antony began to play a leading part in Rome, and had all the edicts of Cæsar confirmed, to prevent hopeless confusion. Interest led Antipater for the time to join Cassius, Cæsar's murderer. Herod won favour as the first to pay him the war tax of about £150,000, levied on Galilee. Antipater showed equal zeal; but when the people were too poor to pay the enormous sum demanded, Cassius sold their sons and daughters as slaves, to make it up. Feeling Herod's usefulness, the republican leader, on leaving Judea, named him procurator of Cœle-Syria, and gave him also military power over all Judea, promising him the crown, if all went well. The Idumean family were still on the top of the tide. But Antipater's course was run. Shortly before the Feast of Tabernacles, in the year 43, he died of poison given him in his wine. The murderer was well known—a follower of Hyrcanus, Malichus by name—who wished to excite insurrection in the Maccabæan's favour, against the Romans and their Idumean viceroy. Herod and his brother, with well-acted craft, feigned friendliness with him, till, a year later, they got him into their power, and murdered him, in turn, with the help of Cassius. Hyrcanus kissed the hands of his new master, and cursed the murdered man as the enemy of his country!

The year 43 closed with wild troubles all over the land. Malich's son on the south, and Antigonus on the north, invaded the land; but Herod overthrew them both. The weak Hyrcanus, who still dreaded the house of Aristobulus, received the conqueror in Jerusalem, with childish gratitude. Herod availed himself of this to ask Mariamne, daughter of Alexander, whom Pompey had beheaded, and granddaughter of Hyrcanus himself, in marriage. He had already one wife, Doris, who had borne him a son, Antipater; but she was now sent away, and went off to bring up her son in deadly hatred of the Maccabæan family, who had taken her young husband from her.

The hopes of the Jewish patriots revived once more after the battle of Philippi, in the autumn of the year 42. It was left to Antony to pay the soldiers after the battle what had been promised them: and to raise the vast sums required, by war taxes and the sale of titles, he moved towards Asia. Here a deputation of Jews protesting against Herod and Phasael's government waited on him; but Herod had always been friendly to the Romans, and was better provided with money than the people. Antony, for his part, hated the Jews, and liked Herod, as the son of an old comrade, with whom, eighteen years before, he had fought against the very people who now accused his son before him. Hyrcanus himself appeared in Ephesus on behalf of the two brothers, and they themselves played their part so well that they were not only confirmed in their own positions, but received substantial favours besides.

Antony was one of those undisciplined natures which revolutionary times produce—a man of powerful but neglected parts, who had grown up in the shattered and utterly immoral Roman world; unbridled in his passions, and, amidst all the energy of his will, without moral restraint. When in Egypt, as colonel of horse, he had for the first time seen Cleopatra, then fourteen years old, but already flirting with the son of Pompey. In the years B.C. 46 to 44 she was living in Cæsar's gardens at Rome as that great man's mistress, and there Antony had been amongst the most zealous in paying her honour. After Cæsar's death he had done her service, and had tried, to get her son Cæsarion put on the list of Cæsar's heirs. But, like Herod, she had been forced to go to war against Antony, because the camp of Cassius was nearer than that of his opponent. For this she was summoned before him, and made her appearance at Tarsus, in Cilicia, in the summer of 41. She was now twenty-eight, but still in the bloom of her beauty, and displayed her charms so effectively that Antony was forthwith her slave. His worst deeds begin from the time he met her. To please her he caused her sister to be dragged out of a temple in Miletus and murdered, and he put to death all she chose to denounce. She herself hastened to Egypt, whither Antony panted to follow her.

In Antioch, in Syria, in the autumn of the same year, he would have put to death a Jewish deputation sent to protest against the two brothers, had not Herod prevented him. The two were, moreover, appointed tetrarchs, with all formality. At Tyre, to which he had advanced, thousands of Jews threw themselves in his way with loud, persistent, fanatical cries that he should depose the brothers. Angry before, he was now furious, and set his troops on them and hewed them down, killing even the prisoners taken. He then moved on to spend the winter with Cleopatra.

Throughout Judea and even in Egypt the deepest despondency reigned among the Jews. The advent of the Messiah was to be preceded by times of darkness and trouble, and so gloomy seemed the state of things then prevailing that it appeared as if the long-expected One must be close at hand. The belief or, at least, hope, found expression in the writings of the day. The Jewish Sibylline Books, composed in Egypt in these years, predicted that "when Rome once rules over Egypt, then will the greatest of the kingdoms, that of the Immortal King, appear among men, and a Holy Lord shall come, who will rule all the countries of the earth, through all ages, as time flows on."

In Palestine there was great excitement. After their bloody inauguration into their office by Antony, the two tetrarchs, Phasael and Herod, could count on few faithful subjects, and a new storm soon rose from the East which threatened to destroy them. Since they had sold themselves to the Romans, the exiled Maccabæan prince had conspired more eagerly with the Parthians, and had been supported

in his appeal by Roman exiles of the party of Brutus and Cassius. The Parthians hesitated long, but at last the rumour came that they were preparing for war. Jerusalem trembled, for the Euphrates was undefended, and there were still garrisons of the republicans, which could not be trusted, all through Syria. The action of Antony in such a crisis was impatiently awaited; but feasting and pleasures reigned in Alexandria. The queen played at dice with the Triumvir; drank and hunted with him; wandered through the streets by night with him, playing rough tricks; she, dressed as a servant-woman, he, as a servant-man. She let him escape her neither by night nor day. Her extravagance was unparalleled; at a dinner she drank crushed pearls, that the cost of a meal might come to a million sestertii, as she had wagered it would. There was no end of her light follies, to amuse him; she had foreign pickled fish hung by divers on his hooks as he fished, and induced the senator Plancus to dance as Glaucus, naked, at one of her banquets, painted blue, his head wreathed with sea-weed, and waving a tail behind him, as he went gliding on all fours. The costliest meals were at all times ready in the castle, for the cook never knew when they would need to be served up.

Sunk in this sensual indulgence, Antony left it to the proconsul of Syria to defend that province, till forced, in the spring of the year 40, to go to Greece, to manage a war which his wife had stirred up, to draw him away from Cleopatra. Meanwhile, Asia Minor was overrun by the Parthians, and Phasael and Herod saw themselves exposed to an early inroad, against which they were helpless.

And now, to use the fine figure of Hausrath, there rose again before Hyrcanus, as if from some long-disused churchyard, the ghost of that dynastic question which for thirty years had haunted the palace, and could not be laid. His nephew Antigonus came from Chalcis, where he had been living with a relative, and obtained help from the Parthian leader, on the promise of giving him 1,000 talents and 500 wives, if he were restored to the throne. At Carmel, Antigonus was greeted with shouts, as king, and he hastened on to Jerusalem, where part of the people joined him. The tetrarchs succeeded in driving him and his adherents into the Temple, and shutting them up in it; but daily fights took place in the streets, and, as Pentecost was near, and crowds of armed and half-armed pilgrims arrived in the city, the brothers were, in their turn, shut up in their palace, from which, however, their soldiers made constant sallies, butchering the crowds like sheep. At last the cup-bearer of the Parthian prince came to the gate with 500 cavalry, asking entrance as a mediator between the factions, and was admitted by Phasael, who was even weak enough to let himself be persuaded to set out for the Parthian headquarters, taking Hyrcanus with him, to conclude arrangements for peace. At Ptolemais they found themselves prisoners, and were soon after fettered and put in confinement. Herod, meanwhile, had refused to listen to similar treacherous invitations, and having mounted

his family on mules by night, set off with them, in the darkness, towards the strong fortress Masada, on the Dead Sea, where his brother Joseph had command, reaching it only after terrible fighting in the passes of the hills. Leaving his women behind in safety, and taking his men with him, he now fled towards Edom; but as he had no money, the sheikhs of Mount Seir refused to receive him.

In the meantime the Parthians had thrown off the mask in Jerusalem, had plundered the city, and were sweeping like a devouring fire through the land, proclaiming Antigonus everywhere as king. In the camp, Hyrcanus was the first to do homage to the new sovereign, but Antigonus flew at him, and with his own teeth bit off his ears, to unfit him for ever for the high priesthood, and then sent him beyond the Euphrates as a prisoner. Phasael escaped further insult by a voluntary death. Deprived of weapons, he beat out his brains against the walls of his dungeon. Antigonus now assumed the name of Mattathias, from the founder of the Maccabæan family,—and the titles of high priest and king. But his position was insecure, for Masada still held out, and was defended by Joseph, Herod's brother, for two years, till Herod relieved it. The barbarities of the Parthians, moreover, undermined his authority. On their small horses of the steppes they scoured the country in troops, mangling the men, maltreating the women, burning down whole towns, and torturing even the defenceless. No wonder that, though a Parthian never watered his horse in the Jordan after the year B.C. 38, the memory of these mounted hordes lingered in the minds of the people, so that even St. John introduces them in the Apocalypse, as a symbol of the plagues of the final judgment, which were to destroy a third part of men.

Herod, repelled from Idumea, fled to Egypt, which Antony had left at the beginning of the year 40. Cleopatra, however, gave him a friendly and even distinguished welcome, thinking she could win him over to her service, and use him as general against the Parthians. But Herod had higher aims. Braving the danger of autumn storms, he set sail for Rome, was shipwrecked off Rhodes, built a new trireme with borrowed money, reached Italy soon after, and on getting to Rome found there both Octavian and Antony. Before them he had his cause pleaded so skilfully that the Senate unanimously appointed him King of Judea, and he was formally installed in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus, with the usual heathen sacrifices. Seven days later he was on his way back to Palestine, and the cause of Antigonus was doomed. This new dignity, however, carried in its bosom the seeds of all Herod's future misery. Hyrcanus, though disqualified for being high priest, could yet be ethnarch, and his grand-child Aristobulus, brother to Mariamne, Herod's betrothed, was alive. Herod's kingship was a wrongful usurpation of the rights of both.

Meanwhile, the position of Antigonus was getting desperate. The cruelties of the Parthians, the failure to take Masada, and a fresh outbreak on a great scale, in Galilee and on the lake of Gennesareth, of

zeal against the heathen oppressors of the land, had turned the Rabbis and the Sanhedrim, hitherto his supporters, against him. Nor were the people more friendly. As he left the Temple on the Day of Atonement, accompanied by a crowd, to conduct him to his palace, the multitude turned away to follow two Rabbis who chanced to pass. Yet Herod was still, in the eyes of the nation, only "the servant of the Asmoneans."

Herod began the war against Antigonus with the assurance of Roman help, but Silo, the Roman general, let himself be bribed by Antigonus, and Herod had to struggle single-handed. The Romans only plundered Jericho, and quartered themselves idly on the nation at large. Herod had to turn against the zealots of Galilee, since he could get no help towards more serious efforts; and he soon extirpated them. The Parthians, however, by this time had been driven out of Asia Minor and Syria, and finally crushed, in a great battle on the Euphrates. Two new legions were now free to aid Herod, but their general, like Silo, cared only for making money, and, like him, took a bribe from Antigonus. In the meantime, Joseph, Herod's brother, fell in battle, and this roused Herod, who was always faithful to his family, to fury. With only a nondescript army he burst on Galilee and Judea, and drove the Maccabæans before him like chaff. Except Jerusalem, the whole land was now his, and he set himself to the task of taking the capital. For two years, with only raw recruits who knew nothing, veterans who had forgotten everything, Itureans who took his pay and did as little as possible for it, and treacherous allies, he had fought against a fanatical people, who turned every hamlet and cavern into a fortress. It needed a genius and a superhuman energy like his to triumph in such a war. In the early spring of 37 B.C. he proceeded to invest Jerusalem, but thought it politic, before the siege actually began, to go to Samaria and marry Mariamne, the grand-daughter of Hyrcanus, his rival and enemy. The Samaritans, in their hatred of the Maccabæan dynasty, had been Herod's devoted supporters in the war; and he had honoured their loyalty by placing his bride, and the rest of his family in their keeping, at Samaria, when it first broke out. He was no sooner married than the work of blood once more began. Jerusalem was besieged by his army of Samaritans, friendly Jews, wild Idumeans, and mercenaries from Phenicia and Lebanon, and fell on the 10th of June, after a fierce struggle, which was followed by wild pillage and slaughter. Antigonus was taken prisoner, and was put to death by the Roman general, at Herod's entreaty, after he had suffered the outrage, hitherto unknown towards a prince, of being scourged like a slave. Thus another Asmonean was out of the way. The family had reigned 126 years. Herod was now really king. A great bribe to the Roman army freed the country of the burden of the Roman support, and the misery of its lawlessness. A bloody proscription, after the pattern of that of the Roman triumvirate, mowed down all enemies within the city, the

gates of which were closed till the executions were ended. In the midst of this, Antony, once more beside Cleopatra, in Egpyt, and needing endless wealth for their mutual prodigalities, sent a demand to all the kingdoms he controlled,—Judea amongst others,—for a vast sum of money. Herod had only an empty treasury; a country strewn with ruins and smoking heaps; and moreover, it was the Sabbath year, in which the laws made by Cæsar prohibited the levying any tax. The proscription had therefore to be made a means of raising funds, as had been done by Octavian and Antony, at Rome. Forty-five of his richest opponents were put to death, and their property confiscated so ruthlessly, that even their coffins were searched at the city gates for jewels or money. Many were glad to escape death by giving up all they had. "The oppression and tyranny had no limit," says Josephus. Herod, however, was none the richer, for he had to send off the whole crown treasures of the Asmoneans to Laodicea, to help to make up the amount demanded from him.

CHAPTER IV.

THE REIGN OF HEROD.

The position of Herod was difficult in the extreme. He had everything to reorganize. Galilee lay exhausted by brigandage, entire towns were unpeopled, as Lydda, Thamna, Gophna, and Emmaus, whose inhabitants had been sold by Cassius as slaves. Jericho had been taken and plundered once and again: five towns round it lay in rubbish and ashes; Marissa had been burned down by the Parthians; and in the midst of all, the bleeding land had to be harried afresh, to satisfy Cleopatra and her slave, Antony. But the genius of Herod erelong built up a strong government out of this chaos, surrounding himself with his old friends, and ruthlessly crushing his enemies. Filling posts, where needful or desirable, with foreigners of any nation, he yet strove to keep on a good footing with the Rabbis, and Pharisee party at large, but gradually took from their Sanhedrim and schools the legal and civil powers they had exercised, leaving them the control only of municipal and ecclesiastical details. A high priest was appointed, such as the times seemed to demand. No native could be trusted; Hyrcanus, who still survived in Babylon, was disqualified; Aristobulus, the king's brother-in-law, was too young, and Herod was a born Idumean. A Rabbi from Babylon was therefore selected, as likely to give no trouble, but the rule was introduced, as an extra precaution, that the office should, henceforth, be held, by any one, only for a short time. Hyrcanus was wiled from the East that Herod might have him in his own power, and prevent his being played off against him in case of another Parthian war.

But Herod's position was a fatal one. Willing to treat his subjects

well, Rome, to whom he owed his crown, forced him to oppress them. He wished to reign as a Jew, but he had made a thank-offering in the temple of Jupiter Capitolinus for the crown. He knew that he could be popular only by observing the Law, but his being king at all was illegal. He flattered the Rabbis, but they were his deadliest enemies. Yet all this was little to the troubles which his ambition had prepared for him in his own household. Had he founded an entirely new dynasty, his relations would have been on his side, and he could have relied on a party. But he had been unwise enough to marry into the family he had overthrown, in the hope of gaining a colour of legitimacy for his reign; and in doing so he had at once failed to appease the injured, and had brought his mortal enemies round him, as his relations. The marriage with Mariamne, by which he hoped to strengthen his title, carried with it his keenest indictment. In Aristobulus, his brother-in-law, he saw only a rival, and he betook himself to the usual remedy of tyrants—murder—to make himself safe. But this only made his position so much the worse, for his best-loved wife knew that he had murdered her brother, and their very children had more right to the throne than himself. His suspicions were thus roused at his every step in his own palace, and could only be appeased by fresh crimes. He raged against his own flesh and blood, and made himself wretched as a man, to be secure as a king.

Towards the close of the year a great disaster befell the Triumvir, Antony. His troops, deserted by their barbarous allies, had to retreat from Media, marching for twenty-seven days through a wasted country, pursued by the Parthians, and often in want of food or water. Twenty thousand foot, and four thousand horse, perished, and all the army train was lost, before he reached the Araxes, on the Caspian Sea, and eight thousand more died before he got to Sidon on the sea-coast. Here he waited for Cleopatra, who was alarmed at hearing that his wife Octavia was coming to meet him, and, pretending that she would die if he deserted her, so unmanned him that he left his army to his officers and went off with her to Egypt. He was now entirely in her hands, and the neighbouring powers soon felt the results.

Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne and Aristobulus, was sorely aggrieved that her son should not have been made high priest, as was his right, and plotted with a crafty officer of Antony's suite then at Jerusalem, to get Antony to help her in the matter. He asked and got the portraits of both brother and sister to send to his master, but it was with the design of getting Antony enamoured of Mariamne and of thus raising a rival to Cleopatra, and his scheme succeeded. Antony fell in love with the Jewish queen, and was only kept from acting on his passion by his fear of the jealousy of his Egyptian mistress. He contented himself for the time to asking Herod to send the boy to him.

Herod was alarmed, and induced Antony to withdraw his request, which he said would lead to a revolt if granted; but seeing how things stood, he deposed the high priest and appointed Aristobulus, then seventeen, in his place. Unfortunately for the lad, the Jews hailed his elevation with delight. The result was that Herod, soon after, got him held under the water in a bath, at Jericho, till he was drowned, and pretended it was an accident.

Alexandra and Mariamne, knowing the truth, thirsted for revenge, and plotted with Cleopatra to obtain it. She on her part was anxious to get hold of Judea, and only used the plotters for this end. Herod was summoned before Antony, but he ordered, before he left, that, should he not return, Alexandra should be put to death as a punishment, and Mariamne, also, killed, to prevent her falling into the hands of Antony. Unfortunately for all, this was told them in his absence, and Mariamne, roused to frenzy, greeted him, on his coming back, with an outburst of the long pent-up hatred she felt at his crimes. Alexandra was forthwith thrown into chains; his sister Salome's husband, who had betrayed the secret, was put to death; Mariamne, whom he passionately loved, was spared a little longer.

Other troubles, from outside, now, for a time, thrust the domestic miseries into the background. Herod had discovered Cleopatra's designs, which were to get all the country, from Egypt to Syria, for herself. Antony was to be persuaded on one pretext or other, to dethrone the different rulers. She did actually get him to put Lysanias, the ruler of the Lebanon district, to death, on pretence of his being in league with the Parthians, and got his principality, which she presently farmed out. Herod was now between her possessions, on both north and south, and feared lest her influence with Antony might be his ruin.

She next begged and got part of the Nabatæan kingdom: then the whole sea-coast of Palestine from the river Eleutherus to Egypt—Tyre and Sidon excepted—and, finally, Herod had to give up to her the Oasis of Jericho with its balsam plantations—the richest part of his kingdom. The summons to Laodicea and the taking away of Jericho seemed to show that Herod's influence with Antony was shaken, and opposition consequently raised itself once more. Plots were again rife on every side, at home and abroad. Cleopatra was his constant terror, for at any moment she might spring some new mine under his feet. Even the Maccabæans were once more raising their heads. The Rabbis, whose schools had flourished immensely since their exclusion from politics, began to interfere with them again. Hillel and Schammai were, respectively, the heads of the more liberal and the harsher parties. But Herod was too much occupied by great affairs to trouble himself about them.

Things were rapidly coming to a crisis in the Roman Empire. The object of the Egyptian queen in lavishing her blandishments on Antony became more and more apparent. She had entangled him in

her snares only to serve herself, and the great Samson laid his head unsuspiciously on her Delilah lap. She dreamed of bringing the whole Eastern empire of Rome, through him, under Egyptian rule, and of becoming the empress of half the world; and it seemed as if he were willing it should be so. He gave mortal offence at Rome by celebrating his triumphs, not there, but at Alexandria. He gave Cleopatra the title of the "queen of kings." Their two sons, Ptolemy and Alexander, were to be "kings of kings." He gave Syria, Phenicia, and Cilicia to the former, and Armenia and Media, with Parthia, as soon as it should be overcome, to the latter; while to their daughter, the young Cleopatra, he handed over Cyrenaika. Cleopatra herself was made Queen of Egypt, Cyprus, Libya, and Cœle-Syria, her son Cæsarion sharing them with her. After the example of the Pharaohs and Ptolemies, both he and she assumed divine honours—Cleopatra as Isis, Antony as Osiris—and their statues were set up in sacred places. Public feeling at Rome was outraged and alarmed. The popular poets sent verses afloat in which Antony sought to make the Jupiter of Rome give way to the barking, dog-headed Anubis, threatened the galleys of Rome with being outsailed by the boats of the Nile, and would fain frighten the trumpets of Rome with the clattering sistrum. Cæsar laid the facts before the Senate, and Antony, in return, made charges against Cæsar. War—long inevitable—at last broke out, and was decided in the sea-fight at Actium. Cleopatra had persuaded her dupe to fight on the water rather than on land, that she might flee to Egypt at the first signs of defeat, and she did this in the midst of the battle, when victory was yet entirely doubtful. Ever his ruin, she thus completed her fatal triumph, for the weak man, as if he could not live without her, forthwith deserted his forces, though his ships were still fighting stoutly, and he had 100,000 foot, and 12,000 horse, on the sea-shore, who had never fought at all. It was noticed that on the day of Actium a terrible earthquake took place in Palestine, killing 10,000 persons and endless cattle. Herod, seeing Antony fallen, forthwith made peace with Cæsar. Fresh plots of Alexandra had been discovered, in which Hyrcanus, now eighty years old, was to be played off against him; but they only led to the revolting sight of the last of the Maccabæans, in extreme old age, being beheaded by his son-in-law. Herod's hands were getting redder and redder with the blood of his kindred. With Cæsar he managed things well, entertaining him royally on his way through Palestine to Egypt, and providing supplies for his army on their march, with equal wisdom and munificence. Meanwhile Antony and Cleopatra spent their last days in feasting and revelry, varied with ghastly trials, before them, of every known poison, by turns, on different prisoners, to see which caused the easiest death. In the autumn of 30 B.C. Antony stabbed himself mortally, and Cleopatra soon after ended her life by poison, leaving Herod to breathe freely for the first time in long years. Octavian took him into favour,

for he needed such a man as a protection on the eastern borders, to defend them against the Parthians. Jericho was given back, Samaria was incorporated with his kingdom, with various coast towns, and some territory beyond the Jordan. Cleopatra's body guard of 400 Gauls was presented to him by Octavian. But if he had honour and rewards, it was at the cost of an expenditure, to do honour and homage to his imperial master, that seemed to have overstrained his resources.

Once more safe from dangers that might well have overwhelmed him, Herod found, on his return from attendance on Octavian, such troubles at home as darkened his whole future life. The quarrels of his seraglio had come to a head. Alexandra and her daughter Mariamne were now the only two left of the old royal race, and were so much the more hated by the kindred of Herod. Mariamne—tall and noble in person—had the pride of a daughter of kings, and let Salome, Herod's sister, feel it. In Herod's absence she discovered that, for the second time, he had left orders to kill her and her mother if he did not return; and she showed what she thought of this when he did come back, by receiving him with undisguised aversion. Her enemies took advantage of this to fan Herod's anger by every scandal they could invent against her, till, in the end, he believed she had been unfaithful, and the fair queen, deserted and betrayed by all, was handed over to the headsman. Herod's remorse, when she had thus actually perished, was awful. He lost his reason for a time, would call for her, lament over her, kept his servants calling her as if she were still alive, gave up all business, and fled to Samaria, where he had married her, to seek relief from his thoughts in hunting. At last he fell into violent illness, and lay seemingly hopeless. Alexandra, furious at her daughter's murder, thought this the right moment to attempt to set Mariamne's two sons on the throne, which was theirs by right, more than their father's. A plague had broken out, and this the Rabbis construed into divine vengeance for the queen's death. The news roused the tyrant, ill as he was. Alexandra was instantly put to death, and many others shared her fate; but already a new suspicion had risen to torment the wretched man. Alexandra's proclamation of his sons as the rightful heirs had made them, also, his fancied enemies. Among the people the memory of Mariamne was sacred, and their hopes were set on her sons.

Octavian was now sole ruler of the Roman world, under the high name of Augustus, and an era of restoration and refinement took the place of destruction and tumult. With the widespread peace, trade revived, and prosperity returned to Judea among other countries. The patronage of literature and art, the construction of public works, and the rebuilding and beautifying of Rome and the cities and towns of the provinces, were now the fashion, set by Augustus, and slavishly followed by vassal kings. In imitation of him, Herod patronized men whose writings could shed a lustre on his court—notably the two

brothers, Nicolaus and Ptolemy, of Damascus, both, able and faithful public servants. Nicolaus was a voluminous and skilful author as well. Other Greeks and half-Greeks were put in offices of trust or honour, as members of the government, or ambassadors, or as tutors and travelling companions to his sons. Most of them served Herod honourably to the last, but there were not wanting some of the Greek sycophants who at that time infested all courts, and one of the worst of these, Eurykles the Lacedæmonian, who amassed wealth by espionage and false witnesses, was destined to be the bad genius of Herod's later years. The biting wit of the Rabbis spoke of the whole heathen government of the court as "the proselytes of the king's table."

A shrewd and able man like Herod, whose leading thought was to flatter and serve Augustus, so as to secure his permanent favour, was of great use in a disturbed border country, to one who, like Augustus, was as much disinclined as unqualified for war. When, therefore, Herod determined in the year B.C. 23 to send Mariamne's two sons to Rome, Cæsar received them with every honour, and gave the lads every facility for growing up in the midst of high Roman life. But they little knew in how dark a gloom all this early splendour would set! By a curious coincidence it was their tutor's son, with whom they rose to manhood, whom Virgil had flattered as an infant by applying to him, in the fourth Eclogue, the Messianic hope of the Jews Of this "Messiah" of Virgil they were now the youthful friends. Herod himself took his sons to Rome, and was honoured by a gift from Augustus of the district of Lebanon, and of the lawless territories of Iturea and Trachonitis, with the fertile plains of the Hauran. The former swarmed with robbers, like Galilee in Herod's youth, and the two latter were filled with wild clans of borderers, who were the terror of the land at large. But on his return, Herod soon reduced them so thoroughly that they were peaceful even under his successors. A year after, Herod could personally report his success to Cæsar's minister Agrippa, at Mitylene, to which he went to meet him. Two years later Herod received from Augustus, in person, at Antioch, the districts of Ulatha and Panias, to round off his kingdom suitably. He now reigned over a larger kingdom than any preceding Jewish monarch. The glory of David seemed to be outshone. From Lebanon to the far South, and from the edge of the Desert to the sea-coast, was Jewish territory. Nor was the political glory granted to Herod less than the material. He was made the representative of Agrippa in the East, and it was required that his counsel should be taken, before anything of moment was done by consuls or governors. Amidst these flatteries from Augustus it was necessary to do something to conciliate the Jews. Hence, in the year 24 Herod had married a Jewish maiden—Mariamne, daughter of Boëthos, a priest of Alexandrian origin, who was raised to the high priesthood, to dignify the alliance with "the fairest woman in the world,"—Jesus, the son

of Phabi, the high priest at the time, being set aside in his favour. Boëthos was a great accession to the small body of the Sadducean dignitaries, but, in politics, was, of course, a Herodian.

So much intercourse with heathenism, however, and the splendid flatteries by which Herod sought to retain and increase the power of his master, were not without their effects on Judaism. Even in the days of the Syrian kings, Palestine had been encircled by Greek towns and cities, and the immigration of heathen settlers had, in Herod's day, made the towns of the Philistine coast and of the Decapolis much more Greek than Jewish. The only bounds to Herod's introduction of foreign novelties were his dread of national opposition. Greek had become the court dialect of the Empire, as French was that of Europe in the days of Louis XIV., and still remains to a great extent; and hence it was universally favoured and spoken by the upper classes in Herod's dominions. Samaria received a Greek name, had Greek coins, and Greek idolatry. The first act of Herod, after Augustus had aggrandised him so greatly, was to build a temple of white marble to his patron, at Panias, the future Cæsarea Philippi, lying finely on one of the southern spurs of Lebanon. Before long, venturing to bring heathenism nearer the centre of the land, he built another temple to Cæsar in Samaria, and surrounded it by a consecrated approach, a furlong and a half in circumference. A grand palace was also begun in Jerusalem itself, in the heathen style, with wide porticoes, rows of pillars, and baths, its one wing receiving the name of Cæsar, the other that of Agrippa. Herodium, which he built on the hill, at the mouth of the deep gorge leading to the Dead Sea, where he had so bravely defended himself against the Parthians, was planned as a Roman castle, rising over an Italian town, with public buildings and stately aqueducts. His grandest undertaking, after the Temple, was the creation of Cæsarea, on the coast. The name was another flattery of the Emperor; that of one of the great signal towers on the smaller harbour was Drusion, after Cæsar's son. The great pier was adorned with splendid pillars. Broad quays, magnificent bazaar's, spacious basilicæ, for the courts of law and other public uses, and huge sailors'-homes, invited a great commerce; and on an eminence above rose a temple, with a colossal statue, visible far out at sea, of Augustus, as Jupiter Olympus, and another of Rome deified as Juno. Theatres and amphitheatres were not wanting. A grand palace, designed for Herod himself, became later the Prætorium of the Roman procurators. Temples to Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, Hercules, Bacchus, Minerva, Victory, and Astarte, soon adorned the town, and showed the many-coloured heathenism of its population. It was, moreover, provided with a system of magnificent underground sewers in the Roman manner. Cæsarea was in every respect a foreign city. Its population was more heathenish than Jewish, and their mutual hatred often led to fierce riots.

In Jerusalem itself a theatre and amphitheatre were erected. Count-

less foreign proselytes and numerous heathens had settled in the city. The coins bore Greek inscriptions. Among the troops of Herod were Thracian, German, and Gallic regiments. So thoroughly, indeed, had foreign elements gained a footing, even in the fanatical capital, in spite of the Rabbis, that, while the people at large retained their native dialect, many Greek words had been permanently incorporated with it. The very Temple displayed proofs of the irrepressible influences of the great world outside Judea. Its outer court was thronged by heathens, and countless gifts presented by heathen princes and nobles adorned the walls of the court of the priests. The Ptolemies had enriched it by numerous costly gifts. Sosius, when he took Jerusalem, in concert with Herod, vowed a golden crown. Among the Temple vessels were wine jars which had been presented by Augustus and his Empress. It was, indeed, a common thing for Romans to make gifts of this kind. They very often, also, presented offerings. When Pompey had taken Jerusalem, his first care was to provide the usual sacrifices. Agrippa, the friend and patron of Herod, offered a hecatomb on his visit to Jerusalem fifteen years before Christ, and Augustus provided that sacrifices should be offered daily at his expense to the Most High God; and such an example must have had countless followers. All the hatred between Jews and heathen was not strong enough to prevent the Temple becoming, like all the famous sanctuaries of the age, a gathering point for the world at large.

There was, clearly, much to keep a fanatical people in a constant tension, and to make them more fanatical still. Heathen temples, with their attendant priests, pompous ritual, and imposing sacrifices, abounded in the land. Gaza, in the south, was virtually a Greek city, and worshipped a local Jupiter as the town god, "who sent rain and fruitfulness on the earth," and associated with him, in his idolatry, another Jupiter—the Victory Bringer—Apollo, the Sun, and Hercules, and the goddesses Fortune, Io, Diana, Juno, and Venus. Ascalon worshipped Jupiter, Neptune, Apollo, the Sun, Minerva, Mercury, Castor and Pollux, and the Syrian Moon goddess Astarte, as the heavenly Venus—the warlike, spear-bearing, Queen of Heaven. On the rocks at Joppa, the marks of the chains were shown which had been forged for Andromeda. A laurel-crowned Jupiter was worshipped at Dora, north of Cæsarea. At Ptolemais the favourite divinity was the goddess Fortune, but with her, Jupiter, Apollo, Diana, Venus, Pluto and Persephone, and Perseus, with the Egyptian Serapis, and the Phrygian Cybele, had their respective worshippers.

In Tyre, the old worship of Baal and Astarte—the Sun and Moon—retained their pre-eminence, with a Greek colouring of the idolatry. In Damascus Greek heathenism was in the ascendant. Jupiter, Hercules, and Bacchus, Diana, Minerva, Fortune, and Victory had their temples, and were stamped on the local coins. In the future province

of Philip heathenism was predominant. In Panias or Cæsarea Philippi, as we have seen, Herod built a temple for the worship of Augustus, but the leading divinity was the god Pan, as the old name of the town—Panias—indicates: Jupiter, however, and Astarte, with a horn of plenty, Apollo, and Diana, had also their votaries, and no doubt their temples. Heathenism flourished in Batanæa, Trachonitis, and Auranitis. Helios, the Sun, was the great object of worship, and so deep-rooted was this idolatry that the early Christian missionaries knew no other way of overthrowing it than by changing it into the name of the prophet Elias, and turning the temples into churches dedicated to him. Round this central divinity, however, the worship of Bacchus, Saturn, Hercules, Minerva, Fortune, Venus, Victory, Peace, and other divinities flourished more or less. The cities of the Decapolis were very heathen.

Thus, all round the central district of Palestine, and to some extent even within its limits, heathenism had already in Herod's day, and, consequently, in Christ's, its temples, altars, idols, and priests. Jehovah was no longer the sole God. With a few exceptions of Syrian or Egyptian divinities, Greek names and rites marked the source of the corruption, though we have given the Roman names as better known. Of all this aggressive heathenism Herod, so far as he dared, was the ostentatious patron. If he could hardly venture on much within the narrow limits of Judea, cenotaphs, mausolea, and other monuments offensive to a Jew, were seen along all the leading roads, and so many places were called by new Latin names, in honour of the imperial family, that a traveller might think he was in Italy. Nor was Herod ever without money to bestow on neighbouring heathen cities, as a mark of friendliness, in building gymnasia, piazzas, theatres, and aqueducts, or in the shape of prizes to be striven for in the circus. It seemed as if the throne of David existed only to spread heathenism. It was clear to the Jews that Herod's heathen subjects were nearest his heart, since, amidst all his lavish munificence to them, he had done nothing to beautify a single Jewish town except Jerusalem, to which his additions were, themselves, heathen. The most appalling reports respecting him spread from mouth to mouth. He had preserved the body of Mariamne for seven years in honey for the most hideous ends: he had strangled all the great Rabbis, except Baba-ben-Boutra, and him he had blinded. The most intense hatred of him prevailed.

It was with the extremest mistrust, therefore, that the Rabbis heard in the year B.C. 20 that Herod intended replacing the humble temple of the Exile by one unspeakably more splendid. It is said that Baba-ben-Boutra had seen a crack in the old structure, and counselled Herod to build another in its place, as an expiation for the murder of Mariamne and the Rabbis, and to conciliate the people for his favour to heathenism. The prophecies were played off by him, to win popular sanction to his undertaking, for Haggai had foretold

that a new temple of surpassing glory would one day be built. But so great was the distrust, that all the materials of the new temple needed to be brought together before a stone of the old one could be touched. At last, on the regnal day of Herod, in the year B.C. 14, the unfinished structure was consecrated, and the lowing of 300 oxen at the Great Altar announced to Jerusalem that the first sacrifice in it was offered. But scarcely was the consecration over than national gratitude was turned into indignation by his setting up a great golden eagle—the emblem of heathen Rome—over the great gate, in expectation of a visit from distinguished strangers from the imperial city. The nation was not duped as the king had expected. In spite of his having begun a temple so magnificent that even a Jewish saying owns that he who had not seen it had seen nothing worth looking at, an abyss yawned between him and them. He had burned the registers of Jerusalem to destroy the pedigrees of which the people boasted: he had tried to make it be believed that he was the descendant of a foreign Jewish family, but no one regarded him as anything but the slave of their kings. All felt that his conduct was as little Jewish as his birth; and that he was rather a Roman proconsul than the King of Israel. Even the worst of the Maccabæan house were bound to the national faith by the functions of the pontificate, but though Herod might be made King of Judea by the favour of Rome, no earthly power could make him a descendant of Aaron, without being which he could not be high priest.

In vain Herod tried to make himself beloved. He had done much to deserve gratitude in these later years, and yet the nation wrote his virtues in water, and his faults in brass. A dreadful famine, followed by pestilence, had spread misery and death in the thirteenth of his reign. No rain had fallen at the required times, and the crops utterly failed, so that there was no food for either man or beast. Men said it was a judgment of God for the defilement of His land by their king's crimes and heathen innovations, for Mariamne's blood, now four years shed, still seemed to cry for vengeance, and since her murder a theatre and circus had profaned Jerusalem, and heathen games, in which men fought with men, to the death, had been set on foot with great pomp. Samaria, the hated rival of Jerusalem, was even then, moreover, being rebuilt, with a heathen temple in it, in which a man —Augustus—was to be worshipped. Herod felt the peril of his position, and acted from policy, as others might have done from the wisest and most energetic philanthropy. Selling the very plate in his palace, and emptying his treasury, he sent funds to Egypt and bought corn, which he brought home and distributed, as a gift, among all the people, for their money had been spent for the merest necessaries before this relief came. He even provided clothing for the nation in the winter, where it was wanted, for sheep and goats alike had been killed for food, and he supplied seed corn for next spring, and thus the evil time was tided over. For a while it seemed as if the people

would really become loyal. But his best acts of one moment were spoiled the next. The bazaars and schools muttered treason continually. One year Herod remitted a third of the taxes, but tongues went against him none the less, and presently he seemed to justify their bitterness by decreeing that all thieves should be sold as slaves to other countries, where, as the people said, they would lose the blessing of Abraham, could not keep the Law, and would be lost for ever. Meanwhile Agrippa visited Jerusalem again, and bore himself so wisely that thousands escorted him to the sea-coast when he left, strewing his path with flowers. Next year Herod returned the visit at Sinope, lavishing bounty on heathen and Jewish communities alike, on his journey out and back. The Jews of each city of Asia Minor seized the opportunity of his passing, to complain, through him, to Agrippa, that the privileges granted them by Cæsar were not observed. The Greeks, on the other hand, reviled them as bloodsuckers and cancers of the community, who refused to honour the gods, and hence had no right to such favour, but Herod prevailed with Agrippa on behalf of the Jews. For once, Jerusalem received its king heartily when he returned; he, on his side, acknowledging the feeling by a remittance of a quarter of the taxes of the year.

The dismal shadow that had rested over the palace in past times had been in part forgotten while the two sons of the murdered Mariamne were in Rome. In the year B.C. 17, however, the old troubles had begun again,—to darken at last into the blackest misery. Herod had recalled his sons from Rome. Alexander, the elder, was eighteen; Aristobulus, the younger, about seventeen. They had grown tall, taking after their mother and her race. In Italy and Judea alike, their birth and position, amidst so many snares, won them universal sympathy. Roman education had given them an open, straightforward way, however, that was ill-fitted to hold its own with their crafty fawning Idumean connections, in Jerusalem. Their morals had, moreover, suffered by their residence in Rome, so that Alexander, at least, appears to have exposed himself to charges against which Jewish ecclesiastical law denounced death. In any case they were heirs to the hatred that had been borne towards their mother. Her fate doubtless affected their bearing towards their father, and it was said that they wished to get the process against Mariamne reversed, and her accusers punished. Their ruin was doubtless determined from the first; and their unsuspicious frankness, which showed their aversion to the other members of the family, gave materials for slander, and aided in their destruction. Herod sought to reconcile the strife by the course usual at the time, and married Aristobulus to his sister Salome's daughter Berenice, who was, unfortunately, still, entirely under the hostile influence of her mother, though she afterwards grew to be a worthy woman. Alexander, as became the heir to the throne, was married to a king's daughter, Glaphyra, of the family of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia—a daughter of a prostitute of the

temple of Venus in Corinth, whom Archelaus had married. The bride might be fair, but she was not prudent, and filled the palace in Jerusalem with stories of her contempt for Herod's family as compared with her own. Whatever Aristobulus said to his wife was carried to Salome, and spies were set on the two young men, to report what they could. The quarrels of the women grew fiercer daily, and involved the two brothers fatally. Nothing else was spoken of in the city but the strife in the palace. Another element of mischief was soon added. Herod's youngest brother, Pheroras, joined the party of Salome. He had married a slave girl, who was so devoted to the Pharisees that she got her husband to pay for them the penalties Herod had imposed, for their having refused to take the oath of allegiance. Pheroras, who was a true Edomite in his fickle faithlessness, was a born conspirator. He had plotted already against Herod, and resolved, in revenge for Glaphyra's loose tongue about his low marriage, to join Salome, and hunt the two youths to death.

On Herod's return from his visit to Agrippa in Asia Minor, in the winter of B.C. 14, he found the palace in a ferment, and heard for the first time that the youths intended to apply to Augustus to have the process against Mariamne reversed. In his rage, he resolved to recall Antipater, his eldest son, who, with his mother, had been banished from the court on account of Mariamne, and who was thus a deadly enemy of her sons. This step was the ruin of Herod's peace. Antipater instantly joined Salome's party: watched every step and caught every word of the unsuspecting youths: never himself accused them to his father, but played the part of Iago consummately, in exciting the suspicions to which Herod's guilty conscience was only too prone. The presence of an elder brother not having sufficed to humble the two, Antipater's mother, Doris, was also recalled to court; that they might see how their hopes of the throne were vanishing. Their enemies, moreover, did their best to stir them up against each other, to work more harm to both.

Antipater, ere long, got himself named as heir, and was sent, as such, to Rome, in the year B.C. 13, but even from Italy he managed to deepen his father's suspicions so much, that Herod himself went to Rome, taking the two young men with him, to have them tried before Cæsar for intended parricide. They defended themselves so well, however, that an outward reconciliation followed, and Herod returned to Jerusalem with them, as joint heirs, with Antipater, of his dominions.

But the quiet was soon disturbed. The mutual hatred of the women, and the plots of Pheroras and Antipater, though for a time fruitless, made progress in the end. The slaves of the youths were tortured, at their suggestion, and accused Alexander of conspiracy; and he, weary of life, and furious at the toil laid for him, was foolish enough to say that he was guilty, but only in common with all Herod's relations, except Antipater. The unfortunate young man made an

exception in his case as a special and trusted friend! The whole of Herod's connections were now unanimous for his death, but it was not to happen yet. His father-in-law found means to appease Herod once more, which was the easier, as Herod had discovered the deceit of Pheroras, and had found his sister Salome carrying on intrigues which he did not approve.

He was indeed to be pitied. The family quarrels embittered his existence, and his suspicions had been so excited that he trusted nobody. Every one was suspected, and could only defend himself by raising suspicions against others. A Greek at court determined to profit by the position of affairs and bring it to a final crisis. Trusting to get money from Antipater, Herod, and Archelaus, alike, if he ended the matter, he laid his plans to bring about the death of the young men. Forging documents and inventing acts, he made Herod believe that his sons were really plotting his death. The tyrant forthwith had them thrown into chains, and their slaves put to torture, stoning those who confessed any guilt. Nothing kept him from putting the princes to death but fear of offending Augustus, for even Salome tormented him day and night to kill them, though one was her son-in-law. At last Herod sent to Rome for permission from Augustus to put them to death. The request cost him the crown of Arabia, Augustus declaring that the man who could not keep his house in order was unfit to be trusted with additional kingdoms. Yet he gave him permission to do as he thought fit with his sons. A court, one-half of Romans, one-half of Jews, was now held at Berytus, and Herod appeared as prosecutor. In vain the Roman proconsul brought his three sons with him to excite the grey-headed despot's fatherly feelings. He acted like a madman: detailed his injuries with the utmost passion, and supplied the want of proof by bursts of fury. The sentence was given as he desired, and he had the satisfaction of having pursued his own sons to the death. In the year B.C. 7, the princes were strangled at Samaria, where Herod had married their mother.

If the hoary murderer hoped for peace by this new crime he was deceived. Antipater lived with his two brothers, Archelaus and Philip, at Rome, and, there, first excited them against his father, and then betrayed them to him. Pheroras, Herod's brother, he sought to make his tool in killing Herod. He was afraid that if he did not destroy his father soon his own infinite villany in the past would be discovered. Pheroras was, in fact, in a false position. His wife and her relations were strongly on the side of the Pharisees, who wished above everything to destroy Herod, and put Pheroras, as their friend, on the throne. Prophecies were circulated by them, that it was the will of God that Herod and his sons should lose the kingdom, and that Pheroras and his wife should inherit it. Their tool, Herod's eunuch, Bagoas, was to have a son who would be the Messiah. Many were won over in the palace, but the plot was dis-

covered, and many Rabbis and others put to death. Herod demanded that Pheroras should divorce his wife, but he preferred to leave the court and go to Perea with her, rather than forsake her. Here he soon after suddenly died, report said, by poison. Herod, however, had his body brought to Jerusalem, and appointed a great national mourning on his account.

Inquiry respecting his death at last brought to light the whole secret history of years. He had died by taking poison, sent by Antipater to kill Herod. The plot was found to have wide ramifications where least suspected. Even the second Mariamne was proved to have been privy to it, and her son Herod, was on this account, blotted out of his father's will. Thus, as Josephus says, did the ghosts of Alexander and Aristobulus go round all the palace, and bring the most deeply hidden secrets to light, summoning to the judgment seat those who seemed freest from suspicion.

Antipater was now unmasked, and Herod saw the kind of man for whom he had sacrificed his wife and his sons. With pretended friendliness he sent for him from Rome, nor did any one warn him of his danger, though proceedings had gone on many months against his mother, ending in her divorce. Perhaps, says Josephus, the spirits of his murdered brothers had closed the mouths of those who might have put him on his guard. His first hint of danger was given by no one being at Cæsarea to receive him, when he landed, but he could not now go back, and determined to put a bold face on it. As he rode up to Jerusalem, however, he saw that his escort was taken from him, and he now felt that he was ruined. Herod received him as he deserved, and handed him over for trial to the Syrian proconsul. All hastened to give witness against one so universally hated. It was proved that he had sought to poison his father. A criminal who was forced to drink what Antipater had sent for Herod presently fell dead. Antipater was led away in chains.

The strong nature of Herod at last gave way under such revelations, which he forthwith communicated to his master at Rome. A deadly illness seized him, and word ran through Jerusalem that he could not recover. The Rabbis could no longer repress their hatred of him, and of the Romans. Their teachings through long years were about to bear fruit. Two were especially popular, Judas, the son of Sariphai, and Matthias, the son of Margolouth, round whom a whole army of young men gathered daily, drinking in from them the spirit of revolution. All that had happened was traced to the anger of Jehovah at Herod's desecration of the Temple and city, and violations of the Law during his whole reign. To win back the divine favour to the nation, the heathen profanations erected by Herod in the Temple must be pulled down, especially the golden eagle over the great gate. Living or dying, they would have eternal rewards for this fidelity to the laws of their fathers. Such counsels from venerated teachers were like fire to the inflammable passions of

youth. In the middle of the day a vast crowd of students of the Law rushed to the Temple; let themselves down with ropes from the top of the great gate, tore down the hated symbol of Rome and of idolatry, and hacked it to pieces in the streets. Mobs rose in other parts of the city, also, to throw down other objects of popular hatred, but the troops were turned out, and the unarmed rioters were scattered, leaving forty young Pharisees in the hands of the military. Brought before Herod and asked who had counselled them to act as they had done, they answered, touchingly, that they did it in obedience to the Law. In vain he tried to alarm them by saying they must die: they only replied that their eternal reward would be so much the greater. The two Rabbis and the young men were sent to Jericho for trial before Herod, and the Rabbis and the ringleaders were burned alive, the others being beheaded. On the night after they suffered there was an eclipse of the moon, which fixes the date as the 11th of March, B.C. 4.

Death was now busy with Herod himself. His life had been a splendid failure. He had a wide kingdom, but his life had been a long struggle with public enemies or with domestic troubles, and in his old age he found that all this misery, which had made him the murderer of his wife, her mother, and his two sons, not to speak of other relations and connections, had been planned for selfish ends by those whom he had trusted. The curse had come back on him to the full, for his eldest son had sought to murder him. His government had been no less signal a failure, for revolt had burst into flames at the mere report of his death. The strong man was bowed to the dust at last. A loathsome disease prostrated him, and he suffered such agonies that men said it was a punishment for his countless iniquities. Carried across the Dead Sea to the sulphur baths of Callirhoe, he fainted and almost died under the treatment. All round him were alarmed lest he should do so before ordering the execution of Antipater, but an attempt on the part of the prisoner to bribe his gaoler was fatal to him. Augustus had granted permission for his execution, with the caustic irony, that it was better to be Herod's sow than his son. Five days after Antipater had fallen Herod himself expired. He was in his seventy-first or seventy-second year when he died.

CHAPTER V.

THE JEWISH WORLD AT THE TIME OF CHRIST.

When the conquest of Babylon by Darius and Cyrus had transferred the fate of the Jews, then in captivity in that empire, to the victorious Persian, their long exile had had its natural effect in rekindling their zeal for the religion of their fathers, and of intensifying their desire to return to their own land. Before Cyrus finally advanced to the conquest of the great city, more than twenty years had been spent, for the most part, in distant military operations. But long before he drew near Babylon, the Jewish leaders, stimulated by the assurances of the prophets then living, or of earlier date, felt sure of his victory, and of the speedy deliverance of their nation from their hated oppressors. The glorious promises of the later chapters of Isaiah, and the exultation of many of the Psalms of the period, are doubtless only illustrations of the intense spiritual excitement that prevailed in the Jewish community, throughout the lands of their exile, during the years immediately preceding the fall of Babylon. All that was noblest in them had been roused to an enthusiasm which might, perhaps, become perverted, but was, henceforth, never to die. The spirit of intense nationality, fed by zeal for their religion as the true faith,—confided to them exclusively as the favourites of Heaven,—had been gradually kindled, and yearned, with an irrepressible earnestness, for a return to their own country, that they might be free to fulfil its requirements. Men of the purest and warmest zeal for the honour and the historic rights of their race had never been wanting during the captivity, as the natural leaders of their brethren, and now took advantage of the character and circumstances of Cyrus to obtain from him a favourable decree for the restoration of Jerusalem, and the free return to it of their people. In the year 536 before Christ, such as were most zealous for their religion, and most devoted to their country and race, were thus enabled once more to settle in the land of their fathers, under the protection of the Persian empire, of which they continued subjects for two hundred years, till Alexander the Great, in B.C. 333, overthrew the Persian power.

The new community, which was to found the Jewish nation for a second time, was by no means numerous, for we still know with certainty that the whole number of these Pilgrim Fathers, who gathered together amidst the ruins of Jerusalem, and the other cities which were open to them, did not amount to more than 42,360 men, with 7,337 servants of both sexes. The dangers and difficulties before those who might return had winnowed the wheat from the chaff: the faint-hearted and indifferent had lingered behind, and only the zealots and

puritans of the captivity had followed Zerubbabel, the leader of the new Exodus.

The rock on which Jewish nationality had foundered in former times had been too frank an intercourse with other nations; too great a readiness to adopt their customs, and even their heathenism; too slight a regard to the distinctively Jewish code of social and political law; and, with these, too wide a corruption of morals. The very existence of the nation had been imperilled, and, now, the one fixed thought, of leader and people alike, was to make it sure for the future.

Their manners, and their whole system of civil and religious laws, offered a ready and effectual means to aid them in this supreme object. It was only necessary to secure an intensely conservative spirit which should exclude all change, and Israel would henceforth have an abiding vitality as a separate people. Nor was this difficult, for the ancient framework of their social polity largely provided for it. The spirit of Judaism, as embodied in its sacred law, directly commanded, or indirectly implied, all that was needed. Intercourse with other nations, as far as possible, must be prevented; the introduction of foreign culture shut out; the youth of the nation trained on a fixed model; and, finally, no gap must be left by which new opinions might possibly rise from within the people themselves. For this last end some studies must be entirely prohibited, and others rewarded with supreme honour and advantage. Finally, some caste or class must make it their special care to see that this great aim of national isolation be steadily carried out—a caste which should itself be secure of abiding unchangeableness, by clinging fanatically to all that was old and traditional, and shrinking from any contact with whatever was foreign or new.

The Mosaic laws had already inclined the Jew to a dislike to friendly intercourse with other nations, and this feeling grew to a fixed contempt and aversion towards the rest of mankind, after the return, as Judaism deepened into a haughty bitterness of soul, under the influence of national sufferings, and weakened spiritual life. Tacitus describes the Jews of his day as true to each other and ready with help, but filled with bitter hatred towards all other men; eating and marrying only among themselves; a people marked by sensual passions, but indulging them only within their own race. . . . The first instruction to proselytes, says he, is to despise the gods, to abjure their country, and to cast off parents, children, or brothers. Juvenal paints them as refusing to point out the way to any but a Jew, or to lead any one, not circumcised, to a fountain he sought.

A nation which thus hated all other men would be little disposed to sit at the feet of any people as scholars. Prejudice, strengthened by express laws, shut out all foreign culture. A curse was denounced against any Jew who kept pigs, or taught his child Greek. No one

could hope for eternal life who read the books of other nations. Josephus, with true Jewish pride, and smooth hypocrisy, tells us that his race looked down on those who had learned the language of foreign nations, such an accomplishment being common not only to free-born men, but to any slave who fancied it. He only is reckoned wise, he adds, among the Jews, who is skilled in the Law, and able to explain the sacred writings. In the days of our Lord, when advancement could be obtained only by a knowledge of Greek and of Grecian culture, pride and scruples often gave way before interest. Still the nation, as a whole, held ignorance of everything not Jewish a sacred part of their religion.

It was as little permitted that the hated Gentile should learn the Hebrew language or read the Law. St. Jerome expatiates on the trouble and cost he had at Jerusalem and Bethlehem to get a Jew to help him in his Hebrew studies. His teacher "feared the Jews, like a second Nicodemus." "He who teaches infidels the Law," said the Rabbis, "transgresses the express words of the command; for God made Jacob" (the Jews, not the heathen) "to know the Law."

But though thus jealous of others, the greatest care was taken by the Jew to teach his own people the sacred books. Josephus boasts that "if any one asked one of his nation a question respecting their Law, he could answer it more readily than give his own name; for he learns every part of it from the first dawn of intelligence, till it is graven into his very soul." That every Jewish child should be taught to read, was held a religious duty; and every boy was required to learn the Law. There was no Jew who did not know thoroughly the duties and rites of his religion, and the great deeds of his fathers; the misfortune was, that they were kept utterly ignorant of any other history than their own.

The exact knowledge of the contents of the Books of the Law was, thus, within the reach of all; but much more was needed than the mere learning by heart the five Books of Moses, to gain the repute of a finished legal knowledge. The almost endless comments of the Rabbis must be mastered, by years of slavish labour, before one was recognized as a really educated man. Hence the nation was divided into two great classes of learned and unlearned, between whom there lay a wide gulf. Puffed up with boundless pride at their attainments, the former frankly denounced their less scholarly countrymen as "cursed countrymen" or boors.

The first trace of a distinct caste of professional legalists, if I may call them so, is found in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, some eighty years after the return from Babylon. Jewish tradition speaks of these early Rabbis as the "men of the Great Synagogue," and adds that they trod in the footsteps of the prophets—that is, that they were their virtual successors. From the first they had great influence in the State. To secure a far more strict observance of the Law than had been known before, they gradually formed what they called

a hedge round it—that is, they added endless refinements and subtleties to every command, that by the observance of such external rites and precepts, the command itself should be the less in danger of being broken. To this "hedge" Judaism owes the rigid fidelity of its people ever since: for rites and forms at all times find a much stricter obedience from the masses than the commands of a spiritual religion.

In spite of all precautions, however, the new State had already the seeds of religious division in its midst, in a number of doctrines, hitherto more or less unknown, which had been brought back in the return from the captivity. These were adopted by the orthodox party, who were the great majority, but rejected by a few, in whom may be traced the germ of the sect afterwards known as the Sadducees. The orthodox leaders, on the other hand, were the beginning of the party afterwards known as the Pharisees. It was they who put the "hedge" round the Law; the Sadducees insisted on standing by the simple letter of the laws of Moses alone. The one were the High-Churchmen of their nation, the others the Rationalists, with a cold creed which denied the existence of angels, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, and rejected Rabbinical tradition. The mass of the nation followed the Pharisees: the Sadducees were always a very small party.

The Pharisees, as the leaders of the great bulk of the people, soon merged more strictly religious aims in the political one of moulding the State into a spurious independent theocracy, under the rule of their party. The Law, as expounded by them, with their thousand additions, was to rule supreme, in civil as well as religious life; in the affairs of the nation, as well as those of the individual.

The stormy times of the later Maccabæan kings gave the Pharisees an opportunity of playing a great part in the nation. The priests had previously given the new State a head in the person of the high priest, Simon, brother of Judas Maccabæus. But his grandsons quarrelled, and the future history of the house became little more than a record of cruelties, disputes for the throne, civil wars, and persecutions. The orthodox party, led by the Pharisees, stoutly resisted the growing corruption, which ended by the Romans assuming supreme authority in Judea, with Herod as the vassal king. Asked to be arbiters, they ended as conquerors. The supremacy of the Pharisees, who had done much to assist the popular cause, was now secure. They had organized themselves as a great power in the State, and maintained this position till the fall of the nation. Under Herod and the Romans, they were the soul of the great national party, which only sullenly submitted to Herod and his family, or to the Roman power, as, alike, foreign oppressors, whom they could not shake off, foes accursed of God, as usurpers of His heritage. To them may be traced the restless turbulence of the nation, which neither terror nor flattery could appease—a turbulence which made

Judea, to Herod and the Roman emperors, what Ireland at one time was to England, and Poland to Russia—the seat of chronic revolt, which knew no considerations of odds against success, and seemed to take counsel of despair.

At the time of our Lord the Pharisees were at the height of their power. Josephus tells us that they numbered above 6,000 men in Judea, in the days of Herod the Great; that the women, as especially given to religious enthusiasm, were on their side, and that they even had power enough, at times, to defy the king. He describes them by name as a party among the Jews who prided themselves greatly on their knowledge of the Law, and made men believe they were holier than their neighbours, and especially in favour with God, and relates how they plotted with some of the ladies of Herod's family to put Herod to death. They thwarted and opposed the king, he says, on every hand, refusing to own his authority or that of Rome, or to swear allegiance either to him or the Emperor, when all the nation was called on to do so, and, with the exception of them, consented. They even claimed the gift of prophecy, through the inspiration of God, asserting that He had decreed that Herod should die, and that the kingdom would pass to those who had shown them favour. The Sadducees had shrunk to a party few in number, though high in position, and had become so unpopular that when appointed to any office, they accepted it sorely against their will, and were forced to carry out the views of their rivals—the Pharisees—for fear of the popular fury.

The political schemes of this great party were not confined to Judea. Its members were numerous in every part of the Roman empire, and were all closely bound to each other. Without a formal organization or a recognized head, they were yet, in effect, a disciplined army, by implicit and universal assent to the same opinions. The same spirit and aim inspired all alike: teacher and follower, over the world, were but mutual echoes. They were, in effect, the democratic party of their nation, the true representatives of the people, with the Maccabæan creed that "God has given to all alike the kingdom, priesthood, and holiness." They considered themselves the guardians of the Law and of the ancestral customs, and trusted implicitly that He who selected their nation to be His peculiar people would protect them and their country from all dangers, believing that, as long as they were faithful to God, no earthly power would in the end be permitted to rule over them. They repudiated the time-serving policy of the Herodian Sadducees, who maintained that a man's destiny was in his own hands, and that human policy ought to dictate political action. Their noble motto was that "everything depends upon God but a man's piety." The misfortune was that, to a large extent, they divorced religion from morality, laying stress on the exact performance of outward rites, rather than on the duties of the heart and life, so that it was possible,

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as has been said of the Indian Brahmins, for the worst men among them to be, in their sense, the most religious.

The one thought of this great party, in every land, was nothing less than the founding of a grand hierarchy, perhaps under the Messiah, in which the Jews should reign over the whole world, and Jerusalem become the metropolis of the earth. They did not confine themselves to the spread of superstition and fanaticism amongst their own race, but sought proselytes in every country, especially among the rich and among women. Even in Rome, sunk as it was, like all the Gentile world of that age, in the dreariness of worn-out religions, they made many female converts among the great, even in the palace of the Cæsars. Their kindness to their poor, their loving family life, their pure morals, compared to the abominations of the times, their view of death as a sleep, their hope of resting with the just, and rising with them to immortal happiness, had great charms in such an age. The Great Synagogue of Ezra's day, according to their traditions, had left them a solemn charge—"to make many scholars;" and they compassed sea and land, in furtherance of this command, to make one proselyte, though their worthless dependence, in too many cases, on mere outward religiousness, often made him, when won, "twofold more the child of hell than themselves." The vast numbers thus gained to Judaism are shown in the multitudes from all countries present at the Passover immediately after our Lord's death, and from many passages in heathen writers.

The Pharisees, or, as I may call them, the Rabbis, had thrown the hereditary priestly body of the nation quite into the shade in the days of Christ. A priest gained his position by birth; a Rabbi owed his to himself. The Temple service, and the vast sums of money received from Jews in all parts of the world, as a yearly tax in support of their religion, gave the priests great influence, and opened, to the higher grades, the control of the highest ecclesiastical offices in the nation, which still survived. But the influence of the Pharisees was so overwhelming that even the highest priests were glad to respect their opinions, to secure public favour. "A priest," says the Mischna, "has precedence of a Levite, a Levite of other Israelites, a common Israelite of a bastard, a bastard of one of the Nethinim, a Nethin of a foreign proselyte, a foreign proselyte of a freed slave. This is the law when these persons are equal in other respects; but if a bastard be a Rabbi (a scholar of the wise), and the high priest not a Rabbi (and, therefore, one of "the ignorant country people" who are "cursed" for not knowing the Pharisaic traditions, and requirements), such a bastard takes a higher place than such a high priest. The multitudinous rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic Law, with the vast additions of the Pharisaic "hedge," and the corrupting influence of power and general flattery, had the worst effects on the Pharisees as a body. They gave themselves up largely to formalism, outward religiousness, self-complacency, im-

measurable spiritual pride, love of praise, superstition, and deceit, till at last, after the destruction of the Temple, they themselves laid the name of Pharisee aside, from its having become the symbol of mingled fanaticism and hypocrisy. How thoroughly does this vindicate the language often used respecting them in the Gospels!

Yet it must not be thought that there were no good men in their number. Though the Talmud names six classes of them, which it denounces, it has a seventh—the Pharisee from Love, who obeys God because he loves Him with all his heart. But the six classes, doubtless, marked the characteristics of too large a proportion. Among the many figures whom our Lord passed in the streets of Jerusalem, and elsewhere, He must often have met those to whom the by-name was given of Shechemite Pharisees—who kept the Law only for interest, as Shechem submitted to circumcision simply to obtain Dinah; or the Tumbling Pharisee who, to appear humble before men, always hung down his head, and shuffled with his feet on the ground, so that he constantly stumbled; or the Bleeding Pharisee who, to keep himself from seeing a woman, walked with his eyes shut, and, so, often bled his head against posts; or the Mortar Pharisee, with a cap like a mortar over his eyes, to shut out all that might shock his pure nature; or the What-more-can-I-do Pharisee, who claimed to have kept the whole Law, and wished to know something new, that he might do it also; or the Pharisee from Fear, who kept the Law only for fear of the judgment to come. But He would also see Pharisees such as Hillel, the greatest of the Rabbis, the second Ezra, who was, perhaps, still alive when Christ was born —who taught his school of a thousand pupils such precepts as "to be gentle, and show all meekness to all men," "when reviled not to revile again," "Love peace and pursue it, be kindly affectionate to all men, and thus commend the law of God," or "Whatsoever thou wouldst not that a man should do to thee, do not thou to him,"—or like just Simeon, who was a Pharisee, or Zacharias, the father of the Baptist, or Gamaliel, the teacher of Paul, or like Paul himself, for all these were Pharisees, and must have been types of many more.

The Pharisees had, however, as a whole, outlived their true usefulness in the days of Christ, and had become largely a hollow pretence and hypocrisy, as the monks and friars of Luther's day, or earlier, had outlived the earnest sincerity and real worth of the days of their founders. They had done good service in former times, in keeping alive the faith of their nation in the Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven, the immortality of the soul, and the judgment to come, but they were now fast sinking into the deep corruption which, in a generation after Christ's death, made them drop the very name of their party.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RABBIS AT THE TIME OF CHRIST, AND THEIR IDEAS RESPECTING THE MESSIAH.

If the most important figures in the society of Christ's day were the Pharisees, it was because they were the Rabbis or teachers of the Law. As such they received superstitious honour, which was, indeed, the great motive, with many, to court the title, or join the party.

The Rabbis were classed with Moses, the patriarchs, and the prophets, and claimed equal reverence. Jacob and Joseph were both said to have been Rabbis. The Targum of Jonathan substitutes Rabbis, or Scribes, for the word "prophets," where it occurs. Josephus speaks of the prophets of Saul's day as Rabbis. In the Jerusalem Targum all the patriarchs are learned Rabbis: Isaac learned in the school of Seth; Jacob attended the school of Eber; and, hence, no wonder that Rabbis are a delight to God like the incense burned before Him! They were to be dearer to Israel than father or mother, because parents avail only in this world, but the Rabbi for ever. They were set above kings, for is it not written, "Through me kings reign?" Their entrance into a house brought a blessing; to live or to eat with them was the highest good fortune. To dine with a Rabbi was as if to enjoy the splendour of heavenly majesty, for it is written, "Then came Aaron and all the elders in Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God."

To learn a single verse, or even a single letter, from a Rabbi could be repaid only by the profoundest respect, for did not tradition say that David learned only two words from Ahithophel, and yet, simply for this, David made him his teacher, counsellor, and friend, as it is written, "Thou art a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance?" The table of the Rabbi was nobler than that of kings; and his crown more glorious than theirs.

The Rabbis went even farther than this in exalting their order. The Mischna declares that it is a greater crime to speak anything to their discredit than to speak against the words of the Law. The words of the Rabbis are to be held as worth more than the words of the prophets; for the prophet is like a king's legate who is to be owned on showing his master's signet, but the Rabbis need no such witness, since it is written of them, "Thou shalt do according to the sentence which they shall shew thee;" whereas it is said of the prophets, "If he giveth thee a sign or a wonder." Miracles are related which happened to confirm the sayings of Rabbis. One cried out, when his opinion was disputed, "May this tree prove that I am right!" and forthwith the tree was torn up by the roots, and hurled a

hundred ells off. But his opponents declared that a tree could prove nothing. "May this stream, then, witness for me!" cried Eliezer, and at once it flowed the opposite way. Still, his opponents urged that water could prove nothing. "Now," said Eliezer, "if truth be on my side, may the walls of the school confirm it!" He had scarcely spoken when the walls began to bow inwards. The Rabbi Joshua threatened them: "What is it to you if the sons of the wise dispute? you shall not fall;" and, to honour Rabbi Joshua, the walls did not fall wholly together; but neither did they go back to their places, that the honour of Rabbi Eliezer might not suffer, but remain slanting to this day. At last Eliezer called for the decision of heaven: "If I am right, let heaven witness." Then came a voice from heaven, and said, "Why dispute ye with Rabbi Eliezer? he is always right!"

Inordinate pride, one might think, could hardly go farther than this, but the bigoted vanity of the Rabbis Christ had daily to meet was capable even of blasphemy in its claims. The Talmud tells us that there are schools of the heavenly Rabbis above, as well as those of the earthly Rabbis here, and relates that there once rose in the great Rabbis' school of heaven a dispute respecting the law of the leper. The Almighty, who is the Chief Rabbi of the skies, pronounced a certain case, detailed in the text, as clean. But all the angels thought differently—for the angels are the scholars in this great academy. Then said they, "Who shall decide in this matter between us?" It was agreed on both sides—God and the angels—to summon Ramban, the son of Nachman, since he was wont to say of himself, "No one is equal to me in questions respecting leprosy." Thereupon the Angel of Death was sent to him, and caused him to die, and brought his soul up to heaven, where Ramban, when brought before the heavenly academy, confirmed the opinion of God, which gave God no little delight. Then heavenly voices, which sounded down even to the earth, exalted the name of Ramban greatly, and miracles were wrought at his grave.

Such a story illustrates better than any words the audacious claims and blasphemous spiritual pride with which our Lord had to contend, and which He often rebukes in the Pharisees of His day. Even the Talmud itself, in other parts, is forced to reprove it. The only palliation of it lies in the fact that the Law itself was written in a language which the people had long ceased to speak, so that it was left to the Rabbis to explain and apply it. The heads and leaders of the nation, they kept it in their leading-strings. It had come into their hands thus, and they were determined to keep it in the same state. Heresy, which would be fatal to the blind unanimity which was their political strength, could only be excluded by rigidly denouncing the least departure from their precepts. The Law and the Prophets must, therefore, be understood only in the sense of their traditions. The reading of the Scriptures was

hence discouraged, lest it should win their hearts, and they should cease to reverence the words of the Rabbis. One hour was to be spent on the Scriptures in the schools; two on the traditions. The study of the Talmud alone won honour from God as from man. That vast mass of traditions, which now fills ten folio volumes, was, in reality, the Bible of the Rabbis and of their scholars.

Yet, in form, the Law received boundless honour. Every saying of the Rabbis had to be based on some words of it, which were, however, explained in their own way. The spirit of the times, the wild fanaticism of the people, and their own bias, tended, alike, to make them set value only on ceremonies and worthless externalisms, to the utter neglect of the spirit of the sacred writings. Still, it was owned that the Law needed no confirmation, while the words of the Rabbis did.

So far as the Roman authority under which they lived left them free, the Jews willingly put all power in the hands of the Rabbis. They or their nominees filled every office, from the highest in the priesthood to the lowest in the community. They were the casuists, the teachers, the priests, the judges, the magistrates, and the physicians of the nation. But their authority went still further, for, by the Rabbinical laws, nearly everything in daily life needed their counsel and aid. No one could be born, circumcised, brought up, educated, betrothed, married, or buried—no one could celebrate the Sabbath or other feasts, or begin a business, or make a contract, or kill a beast for food, or even bake bread, without the advice or presence of a Rabbi. The words of Christ respecting binding and loosing, were a Rabbinical proverb: they bound and they loosed as they thought fit. What they loosed was permitted —what they bound was forbidden. They were the brain, the eyes, the ears, the nerves, the muscles of the people, who were mere children apart from them.

This amazing power, which has lasted for two thousand years, owed its vitality to the fact that no Rabbi could take money for any official duty. They might enslave the minds of the people, but they never abused their despotism to make gain of them. The great Rabbi Hillel says, "He who makes gain of the words of the Law, his life will be taken from the world." No teacher, preacher, judge, or other Rabbinical official, could receive money for his services. In practice this grand law was somewhat modified, but not to any great extent. A Rabbi might receive a moderate sum for his duties, not as payment, but only to make good the loss of time which he might have used for his profit. Even now it is a Jewish proverb that a fat Rabbi is little worth, and such a feeling must have checked those who, if they could, would have turned their position to pecuniary advantage.

How, then, did the Rabbis live? A child destined for this dignity began his training at five years of age, and gradually shrank,

in most cases, into a mere pedant, with no desire in life beyond the few wants needed to enable him to continue his endless study. It was, moreover, required that every Rabbi should learn a trade by which to support himself. "He who does not teach his son a trade," says Rabbi Jehuda, "is much the same as if he taught him to be a thief."

In accordance with this rule, the greatest Rabbis maintained themselves by trades. The most famous of them all, Rabbi Hillel, senior, supported himself by the labour of his hands. One Rabbi was a needle-maker, another a smith, another a shoemaker, and another, like St. Paul, who also was a Rabbi, was a tent-cover weaver. Rabbis who taught in schools received small presents from the children.

But there were ways by which even Rabbis could get wealth. To marry the daughter of one was to advance one's-self in heaven; to get a Rabbi for son-in-law, and provide for him, was to secure a blessing. They could thus marry into the richest families, and they often did it. They could, besides, become partners in prosperous commercial houses.

The office of a Rabbi was open to all, and this of itself secured the favour of the nation to the order, just as the same democratic feeling strengthened the Romish Church in the middle ages. The humblest Jewish boy could be a master of the Law, as the humblest Christian, in after-times, could in the same way be a monk or priest; and the learned son of a labourer might, in both cases, look down with a kind of contempt on the proudest noble.

Such, then, were the Rabbis in the days of our Lord. They were Pharisees as to their party, and Rabbis in their relations to the Law. That one who came, not indeed to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to free them from the perversions of Rabbinical theology, should have been met by the bitterest hatred and a cruel death, was only an illustration of the sad truth, to which every age has borne witness, that ecclesiastical bodies who have the power to persecute, identify even the abuses of their system with the defence of religion, and are capable of any crime in their blind intolerance.

The central and dominant characteristic of the teaching of the Rabbis was the certain advent of a great national Deliverer—the Messiah, or Anointed of God, or in the Greek translation of the title, the Christ. In no other nation than the Jews, has such a conception ever taken such root, or shown such vitality. From the times of their great national troubles, under their later kings, the words of Moses, David, and the prophets had, alike, been cited as divine promises of a mighty Prince, who should "restore the kingdom to Israel." The Captivity only deepened the faith in His duly appearing, by increasing the need of it. Their fathers had clamoured, in far-distant times of distraction and trouble, for a King, who should

be their Messiah, the viceroy of God, anointed by prophets. They had had kings, but had found only a partial good from them. As ages passed, the fascination of the grand Messianic hope grew ever more hallowed, and became the deepest passion in the hearts of all, burning and glowing henceforth, unquenchably, more and more, and irrevocably determining the whole future of the nation.

For a time, Cyrus appeared to realize the promised Deliverer, or at least to be the chosen instrument to prepare the way for Him. Zerubbabel, in his turn, became the centre of Messianic hopes. Simon Maccabæus was made high-priest-king only "until a faithful prophet —the Messiah—should arise." As the glory of their brief independence passed away, and the Roman succeeded the hated Syrian as ruler and oppressor, the hope in the Star which was to come out of Jacob grew brighter, the darker the night. Deep gloom filled every heart, but it was pierced by the beam of this heavenly confidence. Having no present, Israel threw itself on the future. Literature, education, politics, began and ended with the great thought of the Messiah. When would He come? What manner of kingdom would He raise? The national mind had become so inflammable, long before Christ's day, by constant brooding on this one theme, that any bold spirit, rising in revolt against the Roman power, could find an army of fierce disciples who trusted that it should be he who would redeem Israel.

"That the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy," was only the Christian utterance of a universal Jewish belief respecting the Christ. "All the prophets," says R. Chaja, "have prophesied only of the blessedness of the days of the Messiah." But it was to Daniel especially, with his seeming exactness of dates, that the chief regard was paid. It was generally believed that "the times" of that prophet pointed to the twentieth year of Herod the Great, and, when that was past, not to mention other dates, the year 67 of our reckoning was thought the period, and then the year 135; the war which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem rising from the one calculation, and the tremendous insurrection under Hadrian from the other.

With a few, the conception of the Messiah's kingdom was pure and lofty. The hearts of such as Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Simeon, and John the Baptist, realized, more or less, the need of a redemption of the nation from its spiritual corruption, as the first necessity. This grander conception had been slowly forming in the minds of the more religious. Before the days of the Maccabees, the conception of the Messiah had been that of a "Son of David," who should restore the splendour of the Jewish throne; and this, indeed, continued always the general belief. But neither in the Book of Daniel nor in the later religious writings of the Jews before Christ, is the Messiah thus named, nor is there any stress laid on His origin or birthplace. Daniel, and all who wrote after him, paint the Expected One as a heavenly being. He was the Messenger, the Elect

of God, appointed from eternity, to appear in due time, and redeem His people. The world was committed to Him as its Judge: all heathen kings and lords were destined to sink in the dust before Him, and the idols to perish utterly, that the holy people, the chosen of God, under Him, might reign for ever. He was the Son of Man, but, though thus man, had been hidden from eternity, in the all-glorious splendour of heaven, and, indeed, was no other than the SON OF GOD, sitting at the right hand of the Majesty of His Father. He was the Archetypal Man—the ideal of pure and heavenly Manhood, in contrast to the fallen Adam. Two centuries before our era, He was spoken of as "the Word of God," or as "the Word," and as "Wisdom," and as, in this way, the Incarnation of the Godhead.

Such were, in effect, the conceptions gradually matured of the Messiah—the Immortal and Eternal King, clothed with divine power, and yet a man—which had been drawn from the earliest, as well as the latest, sacred or religious writings of the nation. But very few realized that a heavenly King must imply a holy kingdom; that His true reign must be in the purified souls of men. Few realized that the true preparation for His coming was not vainglorious pride, but humiliation for sin.

The prevailing idea of the Rabbis and the people alike, in Christ's day, was, that the Messiah would be simply a great prince, who should found a kingdom of matchless splendour. Nor was the idea of His heavenly origin at all universal: almost all fancied He would be only a human hero, who should lead them to victory.

It was agreed among the Rabbis that His birthplace must be Bethlehem, and that He must rise from the tribe of Judah. It was believed that He would not know that He was the Messiah till Elias came, accompanied by other prophets, and anointed Him. Till then He would be hidden from the people, living unknown among them. The better Rabbis taught that the sins of the nation had kept Him from appearing, and that "if the Jews repented for one day, He would come." He was first to appear in Galilee; for, as the ten tribes had first suffered, they should first be visited. He was to free Israel by force of arms, and subdue the world under it. "How beautiful," says the Jerusalem Targum, "is the King Messiah, who springs from the house of Judah! He girds His loins, and descends, and orders the battle against His enemies, and slays their kings and their chief captains; there is no one so mighty as to stand before Him. He makes the mountains red with the blood of His slaughtered foes; His robes, dyed in their blood, are like the skins of the purple grapes." "The beasts of the field will feed for twelve months on the flesh of the slain, and the birds of the air will feed on them for seven years." "The Lord," says the Targum, "will revenge us on the bands of Gog. At that hour will the power of the nations be broken; they will be like a ship whose tackling is torn away, and whose mast is sprung, so that the sail can no longer be set on it.

Then will Israel divide the treasures of the nations among them—a great store of booty and riches, so that, if there be the lame and blind among them, even they will have their share." The heathen will then turn to the Lord, and walk in His light.

The universal kingdom thus founded was to be an earthly paradise for the Jew. In that day, say the Rabbis, there will be a handful of corn on the top of the mountains, and the stalks will be like palm-trees or pillars. Nor will it be any trouble to reap it, for God will send a wind from His chambers, which will blow down the white flour from the ears. One corn of wheat will be as large as the two kidneys of the hugest ox. All the trees will bear continually. A single grape will load a waggon or a ship, and when it is brought to the house they will draw wine from it as from a cask.

A great king must have a great capital, and hence Jerusalem, the capital of the Messiah's kingdom, will be very glorious. In the days to come, say the Rabbis, God will bring together Sinai, Tabor, and Carmel, and set Jerusalem upon them. It will be so great that it will cover as much ground as a horse can run over from the early morning till its shadow is below it at noon. It will reach to the gates of Damascus. Some of them even tell us that its houses will be built three miles in height. Its gates will be of precious stones and pearls, thirty ells long and as broad, hollowed out. The country round will be full of pearls and precious stones, so that Jews from all parts may come and take of them as they like.

In this splendid city the Messiah is to reign over a people who shall all be prophets. A fruitful stream will break forth from the Temple and water the land, its banks shaded by trees laden with the richest fruits. No sickness or defect will be known. There will be no such thing as a lame man, or any blind or leprous; the dumb will speak and the deaf hear. It will be a triumphal millennium of national pride, glory, and enjoyment.

It was to a people drunk with the vision of such outward felicity and political greatness, under a world-conquering Messiah, that Jesus Christ came, with His utterly opposite doctrines of the aim and nature of the Messiah and His kingdom. Only here and there was there a soul with any higher or purer thoughts than such gross, material, and narrow dreams.

CHAPTER VII.

BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST.

THE time had at last come, when "the mystery which had been hid from ages and from generations"—the high purpose of God in the two thousand years' history of Israel—was to be revealed. The true relations of man to his Maker and Heavenly King had been, throughout, the grand truth to be taught to mankind, in all future ages, from the education and example of the Jewish race, and this truth was now to be revealed directly by God Himself, all lower agencies and means having proved inadequate.

The people of Israel had been set apart by God, while yet only a family, as specially His own. Brought at last, after centuries, through the discipline of the household, the bondage of Egypt, and the life of the wilderness, to a settled home, as a nation, in Canaan, they were still more distinctly proclaimed by Him as "His people," the "portion of Jehovah"—the "lot of His inheritance." The Lord their God was their only King, and they were declared to be a "people holy to Him," chosen as peculiarly His, "above all other nations." In them, as a nation, if they faithfully observed the "covenant" which they had made with Him, was to be exhibited the spectacle of a visible kingdom of God amongst men—its obligations on the side of man, its high privileges on that of Heaven.

As centuries passed, however, it was clear that Israel failed to realize the ideal of a "people of Jehovah," with Him as its direct and supreme Ruler. The anarchy of the days of the Judges—a period not unlike our own early history—showed too clearly that the nation, as such, was far from illustrating the true relations of man to God.

The Kingdom of God on earth, in the simplest form of His direct rule, with no human intervention, having proved too lofty and spiritual a conception, the second step in its development was introduced, by the appointment of a supreme magistrate as His representative and viceroy, He remaining the actual Sovereign. The king of Israel stood, thus, before the people, simply as the deputy of its invisible King, and was as much His servant, bound in all things to carry out only His will, as any of his subjects. Yet his office, as the vicegerent of God, had an awful dignity. He was "the Lord's Anointed" —His Messiah—consecrated to the dignity by the holy oil, which had, till then, been used only for priests.

But the ideal sought was as far from being attained as ever. The history of Israel was very soon only that of other kingdoms round it. Instead of being holy to Jehovah, it turned from Him to serve other gods, and grew corrupt in morals as well as creed. The order of prophets strove to restore the sinking State, and recall the nation to

its faith; and good kings from time to time listened to them, and sought to carry out their counsels. But the people themselves were degenerate, and many of the kings found it easy to lead them into still greater sin and apostasy. The prophets—at once the mouthpieces of God and the tribunes of the people—nobly resisted, but only to become martyrs to their fidelity. The inevitable result came, in the end, in the ruin of the State, and the exile in Assyria and Babylon.

The third step was no less a failure. On the return from captivity, a zeal for Jehovah as the only King of Israel became the deep and abiding passion of all Jews. Henceforward, it was determined that what we might call the "Church" should act as His vicegerent. By turns, priests, priest-kings, and other ecclesiastical or religious leaders, led the nation; but only as temporary substitutes for a great expected King—the Messiah, before whose glory even that of David or Solomon, their most famous monarchs, would be as nothing. But they were as insensible as ever to the highest characteristics of a true Ruler of the "people of God," ruler or subject, alike, looking only to outward power and splendour, and political ambition, and forgetful of the grand fact that the kingdom of God must, first, of necessity, be the reign of holiness and truth, in both. Religion became a thing of outward observances, with which the heart and life had no necessary connection. The Messianic hopes of the centuries immediately before Christ degenerated into a standing conspiracy of the nation against their actual rulers, and a vain confidence that God would raise up some deliverer, who would "restore the kingdom to Israel" in a merely political sense.

Thus the true conception of the kingdom of God had been well-nigh lost. A few of the Rabbis, indeed, with a finer spiritual sense, taught that the condition of the coming of the Messiah must be sincere repentance for their sins, on the part of the nation, and a return to a purer state. But such counsels had little weight with the community. Blindly self-righteous, and yet wedded to evil, everything tended to a speedy extinction of Judaism by its inveterate corruption.

It was at this time that the first direct steps were taken by God towards the advent of the true Messiah, who should finally erect, once for all, His, the true, divine, kingdom, on earth, all the dreams of which had hitherto been such disastrous failures. He would thus save Judaism from itself, by perpetuating that which was permanent in it under His holy and spiritual reign. Discarding all that was merely temporary and accidental, and bringing into lasting prominence whatever of everlasting truth the older dispensation contained, He would found the only true kingdom of God possible on earth; one in which the perfect holiness of the Anointed Head should stimulate a like holiness in all, and, indeed, demand it. The Messianic hope was to be realized in a grander and loftier sense than man had

dreamed, but the very grandeur and loftiness of the realization would attest its divine authority and source.

The priests among the Jews had been divided, since the time of David, that is, for about a thousand years, into twenty-four courses, known also as "houses" and "families." Of the original courses, however, only four, each numbering about a thousand members, had returned from Babylon, after the captivity; but out of these the old twenty-four courses were reconstituted, with the same names as before, that the original organization might be perpetuated as far as possible. The priesthood of the second Temple, however, never took the same rank as that of the first. The diminished glory of the sanctuary in which it ministered, compared with that of Solomon, alone, made this inevitable, for the second Temple had no longer the sacred ark, with its mercy seat and the overshadowing cherubim, nor the holy fire, kindled at first from heaven, nor the mysterious Shechina, or Glory of God, in the Holy of Holies, nor the tables of stone written by the finger of God, nor the ancient Book of the Law, handed down from the great lawgiver, Moses. The spirit of prophecy was no longer granted; the Urim and Thummim no longer shone out mysterious oracles from the breast of the high priest, and the holy anointing oil, that had been handed down, as the Rabbis taught, from the days of Aaron, had been lost. There could thus be no consecration of the high priest, or his humbler brethren, by that symbol which above all others had been most sacred—the priestly anointing. The priests were now set apart to their office only by solemnly clothing them with their official robes, though the subordinate acts of sacrifice and offering were no doubt continued. The rise of the Synagogue, and the supreme importance attached to the study of the Law, tended also to throw the office of the priest into the background. In the centuries after the Return, the Rabbi became the foremost figure in Jewish history. Yet the priest was a necessary appendage to the Temple, and even the traditions of the past lent his office dignity.

The services at the Temple in Jerusalem, where alone sacrifices could be offered, were entrusted to the care of each course in rotation, for a week of six days and two Sabbaths, and, hence, the members of each, whose ministrations might be required, had to go up to Jerusalem twice a-year.

As the office was hereditary, the number of the priesthood had become very great in the days of our Lord, so that, according to the Talmud, in addition to those who lived in the country, and came up to take their turn in the Temple services, there were no fewer than 24,000 settled in Jerusalem, and half that number in Jericho. This, however, is no doubt an exaggeration. Josephus is more likely correct in estimating the whole number at somewhat over 20,000. But even this was an enormous proportion of clergy to the population of a country like Judea, as the name was then applied,—a district of

about 100 miles in length, and sixty in breadth, or as nearly as possible of the same number of square miles as Yorkshire. They must have been a more familiar sight in the streets of Jerusalem, and of the towns and villages, than the seemingly countless ecclesiastics in the towns and cities of Spain or Italy at this time.

The social position, as well as official standing, of such a large order necessarily varied greatly. First in consideration, after the high priest, came his acting deputy, or assistant—the *Sagan*—and those who had filled that office, and the heads or presidents of the twenty-four courses—collectively, the "high priests," or "chief priests," of Josephus and the New Testament; and next, the large body of officiating priests, the counterpart of our working clergy. But there were, besides, large numbers, like the lower priests of Russia or Italy, uneducated, who were the object of contempt, from their ignorance of the Law, in the Rabbinical sense. The countless sacrifices and offerings, with the multiplied forms to be observed in connection with them, which were settled by the strictest rules, required a knowledge at once minute and extensive, which could only be attained by assiduous and long-continued labour. Hence, it is no wonder that there were many priests who knew little beyond the rites in which they had to take part. The priesthood was thus divided into "the learned"—or those who knew and observed the countless laws of ceremonial cleanness, and the endless ritual enforced—and "common priests." There were others, doubtless in large numbers, whom some physical defect, or other cause, disqualified from public ministrations, though they retained a right to their share of the offerings.

The great mass of the order must have been poor in the days of Christ, which were certainly in no way higher in tone than those of Malachi, when blind, and torn, and lame, and sick, beasts were offered for sacrifice, so that the priest as well as the altar suffered; and "the whole nation" withheld their tithes and offerings. The higher ranks of the priesthood—rich and haughty—contributed to the degradation of their poorer brethren, whom they despised, oppressed, and plundered. Nor was the general character of the priesthood unaffected by the corruption of the times; as a class, they were blind guides of the blind. Not a few, however, in so numerous a body, must have retained more or less religious sensibility, for we find that many even of the members of the Jerusalem Council were so alive to the corruption of the hierarchy at large, that they believed on Christ, its great antagonist, and a large number of priests, shortly after His crucifixion, openly joined His disciples. But the evil was deep-rooted, and widely spread, and the corruption and demoralization of the order, especially in its higher ranks, grew more and more complete. The high society of Jerusalem was mainly comprised in a circle of governing priestly families, and their example tainted the whole priesthood.

The pride, the violence, irreligion, and luxury of this ecclesiastical aristocracy already, at the beginning of our era, pointed to the excesses they erelong reached. After the banishment of Archelaus, in the early childhood of our Lord, the government became an aristocracy—the high priests virtually ruling the nation—under the Romans. Under Herod and his son, they had been mere puppets, elevated to their dignity, for their proved subserviency to their royal masters. Under Agrippa II., ladies bought the high priesthood for their husbands for so much money. Martha, daughter of Boëthus, one of these simoniacs, when she went to see her husband, spread carpets from her door to the gate of the Temple. The high priests themselves were ashamed of their most sacred functions. The having to preside over the sacrifices was thought by some so repulsive and degrading, that they wore silk gloves when officiating, to keep their hands from touching the victims. Given to gluttony—the special vice of their Roman masters—they also, like them, abandoned themselves to luxury, and oppressed the poor, to obtain the means for indulgence. Thoroughly heathen in feeling, they courted the favour of the Romans, who repaid them by rich places for their sons, and they openly robbed and oppressed the poor priests supported by the people, going the length of violence in doing so. Josephus tells us that they even sent their servants to the threshing-floors, and took away by force the tithes that belonged to the priests, beating those who resisted, and that thus not a few poorer priests died from want.

Yet the office of the priest, in itself, was the highest in Jewish society, and the whole order formed a national aristocracy, however poor and degraded many of its members might be. Every priest was the lineal descendant of a priestly ancestry running back to Aaron, and as the wives of the order were generally chosen from within its families, this lofty pedigree in many cases marked both parents.

The law fixed no certain age at which the young priest should enter on his office, though the Rabbis maintain that he needed to be at least twenty, since David had appointed that age for the Levites. As in corrupt ages of the Church, however, this wholesome rule was not always observed, for Josephus tells us that Herod made Aristobulus high priest when he was seventeen, and we read of common priests whose beards were only beginning to grow.

The special consecration of the young priest began while he was yet only a lad. As soon as the down appeared on his cheek he had to appear before the council of the Temple, that his genealogy might be inspected. If it proved faulty, he left the Temple clad in black, and had to seek another calling: if it satisfied the council, a further ordeal awaited him. There were 140 bodily defects, any one of which would incapacitate him from sacred duties, and he was now carefully inspected to discover if he were free from them. If he had no blemish of any kind, the white tunic of a priest was given him, and he

began his official life in its humbler duties, as a training for higher responsibilities in after years.

Ordination, or rather the formal consecration, followed, when the priest attained the legal age. For this, much more was necessary, in theory, than freedom from bodily blemish. The candidate must be of blameless character, though, in such an age, this, no doubt, was little considered.

The ceremony, as originally prescribed, was imposing. The neophyte was first washed before the sanctuary, as a typical cleansing, and then clothed in his robe. His head was next anointed with holy oil, and then his priestly turban was put on him. A young ox was now slain as a sin-offering, the priest putting his hands upon its head; then a ram followed, as a whole burnt offering, and after that, a second ram as an offering of consecration, and this was the crowning feature in the rite. Some of the warm blood of the victim was put on the right ear, the right thumb, and the right great toe of the candidate, to show his complete consecration to the service of Jehovah. He was then sprinkled with the blood flowing from the altar, and with the holy oil, as if to convey to him their purifying virtues, and transform him into another man. This sprinkling was the sign of completed consecration; he was now a priest. The pieces of the ram for the altar, with the meat-offering that accompanied them, were put into his hands, to show that he could, henceforth, himself prepare what was needed for the altar services. Having laid them on the altar, other ceremonies followed. The pieces of the sacrifice usually given to the priest were consumed as a special sin-offering, and with their burning on the altar the installation into office ended. The first day, however, did not close the ceremonies. The same sacrifices offered on this day were required to be repeated on each of the seven days following, that the solemnity of the act might be felt by all. It had been thus in the early and glorious days of the priesthood, but how many of these ceremonies were observed under the second Temple is not known.

The official dress of a priest, like that of the priests of ancient Egypt, was of white linen. On his head he wore a kind of turban in his ministrations, reverence demanding that he should not enter the presence of Jehovah uncovered, and for the same reason his feet were left bare, the ground on which he stood, in the near vision of the Almighty, being holy. The full official dress was worn only in the Temple, and was kept there by a special guardian, when the ministrations ended for the time. In private life a simpler dress was worn, but whether in his service at the Temple or at his house, he was still a priest, even to the eye. The richly ornamented dress of the high priest—the "golden vestment" as it was called by the Rabbis—was, of course, much more costly than that of his brethren, and passed down from one high priest to another. It marks the character of the times that, under the Romans, it was kept in their hands, and only given out to the high priest, for use, when needed.

The duties of the priests were many and various. It was their awful and peculiar honour to "come near the Lord." None but they could minister before Him, in the Holy Place where He manifested His presence: none others could "come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary or the altar." It was death for any one not a priest to usurp these sacred prerogatives. They offered the morning and evening incense; trimmed the lamps of the golden candlestick, and filled them with oil; set out the shewbread weekly; kept up the fire on the great altar in front of the Temple; removed the ashes of the sacrifices; took part in the slaying and cutting up of victims, and especially in the sprinkling of their blood; and laid the offerings of all kinds on the altar. They also announced the new moons, which were sacred days, like the Sabbaths, by the blowing of trumpets. But this was a small part of their duties. They had to examine all cases of ceremonial uncleanness, especially leprosy, clearing those who were pure, and pronouncing others unclean; to estimate, for commutation, the value of the countless offerings vowed to the Temple, and to watch the interior of the Temple by night. They were required, moreover, to instruct the people in the niceties of the Law, and to give decisions on many points reserved, among us, to magistrates. The priests, in fact, were, within certain limits, the judges and magistrates of the land, though the Sanhedrim, which was the supreme court in later Jewish history, was composed of chief priests, laymen, and scribes, or Rabbis, in apparently equal numbers.

It was necessary that an officiating priest should be in every point ceremonially "clean" during his period of duty, for a priest who was not "clean" could not enter the Temple. A wise law prohibited his tasting wine or strong drink during the term of his service. The demonstrations of grief common to the nation were unlawful in him; he must not rend his garments, or cut himself, or shave his beard or head, whatever befell him or his. Contact with the dead was to be carefully shunned as a defilement.

The same ideal purity, as of one holy to the Lord, marked the laws of the priest's marriage, for he could only marry a virgin, or a widow who had not been divorced, and she must be a pure Israelite, lawfully born. The daughters of priests were held in special honour, and marriage of priests with them was in high favour. A priest, says Josephus, must marry a wife of his own nation, without having any regard to money, or other dignities; but he is to make a scrutiny, and take his wife's genealogy from the ancient records, and procure many witnesses to it, just as his own had been carefully tested before his consecration. An order thus guarded by countless special laws must have been as sacred in the eyes of the multitude as the almost similarly exclusive Brahmins of India. Josephus could make no boast of which he felt so proud as that he belonged to such a sacerdotal nobility.

Thirteen towns, mostly near Jerusalem, and thus affording

easy access to it, when their duties called them to the Temple, were assigned to the priests. During their term of service they lived in rooms in the Temple buildings, but they came there alone, leaving their households behind them.

For the support of the order, provision had been made from the earliest times, by assigning them part of the various tithes paid by the people; fees for the redemption of the first-born of man or beast, and in commutation of vows, and what may be called the perquisites of their office—the shewbread, heave-offerings, parts of the sacrifices, the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and other things of the same kind. Officiating priests were thus secured in moderate comfort, if they received a fair proportion of their dues, and the whole order had, besides, the great advantage of freedom from any tax, and from military service.

Among the members of this sacred caste ministering in the Temple, in the autumn of the sixth year before that with which the Christian era, as commonly reckoned, commences, was one who had come up, apparently, from Hebron. He was now an elderly man, and had left behind him, at home, a childless wife—Elisabeth by name—like himself, advanced in years. The two were in the fullest sense "Israelites indeed:" their family records had established their common descent from Aaron, and their lives proved their lofty realization of the national faith, for "they were, both, righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

But, notwithstanding all the satisfaction and inward peace of innocent and godly lives, in spite of the natural pride they, doubtless, felt in the consideration that must have been shown them, as born of a priestly ancestry, stretching back through fifteen hundred years, and though they must have had round them the comforts of a modest competency, there was a secret grief in the heart of both. Elisabeth had no child, and what this meant to a Hebrew wife it is hard for us to fancy. Rachel's words, "Give me children, or else I die," were the burden of every childless woman's heart in Israel. The birth of a child was the removal of a reproach. Hannah's prayer for a son was that of all Jewish wives in the same position. To have no child was regarded as a heavy punishment from the hand of God. How bitter the thought that his name should perish was for a Jew to bear, was seen in the law which required that a childless widow should be, forthwith, married by a dead husband's brother, that children might be raised up to preserve the memory of the childless man, by being accounted his. Nor was it enough that one brother of a number acted thus: in the imaginary instance given by the Sadducees to our Lord, seven brothers, in succession, took a dead brother's wife, for this object. The birth of a child was therefore a special blessing, as a security that the name of his father "should not be cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place," and that it should not be "put out of Israel." Ancient nations, generally, seem

to have had this feeling, and it is still so strong among Orientals, that after the birth of a first-born son, a father and a mother are no longer known by their own names, but as the father and mother of the child. There was, besides a higher thought of possible relations, however distant, to the great expected Messiah, by the birth of children; but Zacharias and Elisabeth had reason enough to sorrow at their childless home, even on the humbler ground of natural sentiments. They had grieved over their misfortune, and had made it the burden of many prayers, but years passed, and they had both grown elderly, and yet no child had been vouchsafed them.

The autumn service of the course of Abia had taken Zacharias to Jerusalem, and his week of Temple duty was passing. As a ministering priest he had a chamber in the cloisters that ran along the sides of the outer Temple court. His office took him day by day, in his white official robes, to the fourth and inmost space, immediately beside the sanctuary itself, a part into which none could enter but priests wearing their sacred garments. This court rose above three other spaces, each, in succession, lower—the court of the men, that of the women, and that of foreigners who had become Jews—each, separated from the other by marble walls or balustrades, and approached only by great gates, famous throughout the world for their magnificence. Over all, in the central space, stood the sanctuary, springing from a level fifteen steps higher than the court of the Israelites, next, below it, and thus visible from all parts, as the crown and glory of the whole terraced structure. It was built of blocks of fine white marble, each about 37 feet in length, 12 in height, and 18 in breadth, the courses which formed the foundations, measuring, in some cases, the still huger size of 70 feet in length, 9 in width, and 8 in height. The whole area enclosed within the Temple bounds formed a square of 600 or 900 feet, and over the highest level of this rose the gilded walls of the sanctuary, a building, perhaps, about 150 feet long by 90 broad, with two wings or shoulders of 30 feet each, on a line with the façade, the whole surmounted by a roof glittering with gilded spikes, to prevent pollution from above by unclean birds alighting on it.

When it is remembered that the natural surface of the hill on which these amazing structures were built was altogether too contracted and steep to supply the level space needed, the grandeur of the architecture as a whole will be even more apparent. The plateau of the successive courts was only secured by building up a wall from the valley beneath, to the height required, and this, on the south side, required a solid mass of masonry about 600 feet in length, and almost equal in height to the tallest of our church spires, while, on the top of an erection so unequalled, rose the magnificent Royal Porch, a building longer and higher than York Cathedral. No wonder Josephus calls such a wall "the most prodigious work ever heard of," nor that its surpassing magnificence, in these years, when its dazzling

whiteness shone fresh from the mason's hands, should have gone abroad to all countries.

The sanctuary itself was divided into two unequal parts—the Holy and the Holy of Holies. Before the porch stood the great altar for burnt offerings, with rows of rings,—to which the beasts for sacrifice were tied,—sunk in the pavement, near,—while a line of cedar beams, resting on eight low pillars, gave the priests the means of hanging up the slaughtered victims, to dress them for the altar. The Holy of Holies, the inmost division of the sanctuary, was left an awful solitude throughout the year, except on the great Day of Atonement, on which the high priest entered it alone. In the Temple standing in Christ's day it was entirely empty, unless, indeed, the tradition of the Mischna be correct, that a stone stood in it, instead of the long-lost Ark of the Covenant, as a spot on which the high priest could rest his censer. Great gates, plated with gold, shut in this awful chamber, and a thick veil of Babylonian tapestry, in which blue and scarlet and purple were woven into a fabric of matchless beauty and enormous value—the veil that was afterwards rent in twain at the time of the crucifixion—hung before it, dividing it from the Holy Place, and shutting out all light from its mysterious depths.

The entrance to the Holy Place was by two doors, of vast height and breadth, covered with plates of gold, as was the whole front on each side of them, over a breadth of thirty feet, and a height of fully a hundred and thirty. The upper part, over the gates, which remained always open, was covered by an ornamentation of great golden vines, from which hung clusters of grapes the length of a man's stature. No wonder Josephus adds that such a front wanted nothing that could give an idea of splendour, since the plates of gold, of great weight, as he adds, reflected the rays of the morning sun with a dazzling brightness, from which the eyes turned away overpowered. When the gates of the Holy Place were opened, all was seen as far as the inner veil, and all glittered with a surface of beaten gold.

In the Holy Place stood only three things: the golden candlestick with its seven lamps, in allusion to the seven planets; the table of shewbread; and, between them, the altar of incense. In the entrance, which was merely the open fore-half of the sanctuary, and, like the rest of the front, was covered with plates of gold, stood two tables, one of marble, the other of gold, on which the priests, at their entering or coming out of the Holy Place, laid the old shewbread and the new. Before the entrance, in the court of the priests, stood the great altar of burnt offering, of unhewn stone, which no tool had touched, and the brazen laver, in which the priests washed their hands and feet before beginning their ministrations.

"In the morning," says Josephus, "at the opening of the inner temple," that is, of the court of the priests, "those who are to officiate, receive the sacrifices, as they do again at noon. It is not lawful to carry any vessel into the holy house. When the days are over in which

a course of priests officiates, other priests succeed in the performance of the sacrifices, and assemble together at mid-day and receive the keys of the Temple, and the vessels." Among the various priestly duties none was of such esteem as the offering of incense. The heat of eastern and southern countries, by its unpleasant physical effects, doubtless first led to the practice of burning odorous substances, though luxury and mere indulgence soon adopted it. Ultimately, not only chambers, clothes, and furniture were thus perfumed, but the beards and whole persons of guests, in great houses, at their coming and leaving. Burning censers were waved before princes, and altars, on which incense was burned, were raised before them in the streets, when they entered towns or cities. Thus esteemed a mark of the highest honour, the custom was early transferred to religious worship, in the belief that the deity delighted in the odours thus offered. Hence it became a part of the recognized worship of Jehovah, the Mosaic law requiring incense to be burnt on the altar with many offerings. A daily incense offering morning and evening, on a special altar, in the Holy Place, at the times of trimming and kindling the sacred lamps, was also ordained, and another yearly, in the Holy of Holies, by the high priest, on the great Day of Atonement.

The daily incense offering required the ministration of two priests, one of whom bore the incense in a special vessel; the other, glowing embers in a golden fire-pan, from the altar of burnt sacrifice before the entrance of the Holy Place, and these he spread on an altar within. The first priest then sprinkled the incense on the burning coals, an office held so honourable that no one was allowed to perform it twice, since it brought the offering priest nearer the Divine Presence in the Holy of Holies than any other priestly act, and carried with it the richest blessing from on high, which all ought to have a chance of thus obtaining. Like the rest of the sacred functions, it was determined daily by lot.

During the burning of the incense, each morning and night, the worshippers in the different courts remained in silent prayer, their faces towards the holy spot where the symbol of their devotions was ascending in fragrant clouds towards heaven: their fondest hope being that their prayer might rise up, odorous and well-pleasing like it, toward Jehovah. While the priests entered, morning and evening, into the Holy Place, with its seven lamps burning night and day for ever, the memento of the awful presence in the pillar of fire that had guarded them of old, and its table of "continual bread" of the presence—a male lamb, with the due fruit and drink-offering connected with such a sacrifice, was ready to be offered on the great altar of burnt offering outside. The atoning sacrifice, and the clouds of incense, the outward symbol of the prayers of the people, were thus indissolubly associated, and so holy were they in all eyes, that the hours sacred to them were known as those of the morning and the evening sacrifice. They served, still further, to set a time, throughout the Jewish world, for the morning and evening prayers of all Israel, and thus, when the priest stood

by the incense altar, and the flame of the burnt offering, outside, ascended, the prayers offered in the Temple courts were repeated all over the land, and even in every region, however distant, to which a godly Jew had wandered.

On the day when our narrative opens, the lot for the daily incense offering had fallen on Zacharias. In his white sacerdotal robes, with covered head and naked feet, at the tinkling of the bell which announced that the morning or evening sacrifice was about to be laid on the great altar, he entered the Holy Place, that the clouds of the incense, which symbolized Israel's prayers, might herald the way for the smoke of the victim presently to be burned in their stead. In a place so sacred, separated only by a veil from the Holy of Holies, the awful presence chamber of the Almighty—a place where God had already shown that He was near, by human words to the officiating priest—at a moment so solemn, when it had fallen to him to enjoy an awful honour which most of his brethren could not expect to obtain, and which could never be repeated, he must have been well-nigh overpowered with emotion. At the tinkling of the bell all the priests and Levites took their stations through the Temple courts, and he and his helper began their ministrations.

And now the coals are laid on the altar, the helping priest retires, and Zacharias is left alone with the mysterious, ever-burning, lamps, and the glow of the altar which was believed to have been kindled, at first, from the pillar of fire in the desert, and to have been kept unquenched, by miracle, since then. He pours the incense on the flames, and its fragrance rises in clouds, which are the symbol of the prayers of Israel, now rising over all the earth. As the intercessor for his people, for the time, he, too, joins his supplications.

We need not question what the burden of that prayer must have been, with one, who, like him, "waited for the Consolation of Israel," and "looked for Redemption." It was, doubtless, that the sins of the nation, his own sins, and the sins of his household, might be forgiven; that Jehovah would accept the atonement of the lamb presently to burn on the great altar in their stead; and that the long-expected Hope of Israel, the Messiah foretold by prophets, might soon appear.

While he prays, there stands a mysterious Presence before him, on the right side of the altar, the side of good omen, as the angels, afterwards, appeared at the right side, in the Holy Sepulchre, and as Christ was seen, by the Martyr Stephen, standing on the Right Hand of God. No wonder he was alarmed at such a sight, in such a place. Fear of the supernatural is instinctive. In the history of his own nation, which Zacharias, like every Jew, knew so well, Jacob had held it a wonder that he had, as he believed, seen God face to face, and that his life was preserved; Jehovah Himself had hidden Moses in a cleft of the rock, that he might see the divine glory only after it had passed by, "For no man," He had said, "shall see me and live." The stout-hearted Gideon had trembled at the sight of an angel;

Manoah had expected to die after a similar vision: and when Daniel saw the very angel now before Zacharias "there remained no strength in him."

But Gabriel had come on a mission befitting the world from which he had been sent. The hour had arrived when the prayer which Zacharias, and those like him, had so long raised, should be heard. The Messiah was about to be revealed, and the faithful priest who had so longed for His appearing would be honoured by a relationship to Him. He had for many a year desired a son: not only would his wish be granted, at last, but the son to be born would be the prophet, long announced, to go before the Expected One, to prepare His way. He needs not fear: he who speaks is Gabriel, the archangel, who stands in the presence of God, and as one who thus always beholds the face of the Great Father in heaven, he has a tender love to His children on earth. Had Zacharias thought how the skies rejoice at a sinner's repenting; how the angels are always near us when we pray; how they bear our prayers into the presence of God: and how, at last, they guide the souls of the just to everlasting joy; he would have rejoiced even while he trembled.

But the heart is slow to receive the access of any sudden joy, and to lay aside disappointment. The thought rises in the heart of Zacharias that the glad tidings of the birth of the Messiah may well be true but, as to the son promised his wife, stricken in years as she now is, can it be possible? A sudden dumbness, imposed at the angel's word, at once rebukes his doubt, and confirms his faith.

Meanwhile, the multitude without wondered at the delay in his reappearance, to bless and dismiss them. The priest's coming out of the sanctuary was the signal for the lamb being laid on the altar, and was a moment of passing interest in Jewish worship. A passage in that noble relic of pre-Christian Jewish literature, Ecclesiasticus, respecting the great patriot high priest, Simon the Just, brings a similar scene, though on a far grander scale, on the great Day of Atonement, vividly before us. The crowds now around marked some other than a common day, and we need only tone down the picture to suit it to the present case; for Zacharias, as a faithful priest, engaged on such a service, was, for the time, an object of almost sacred reverence.

"How glorious was he," says the Son of Sirach, "before the multitude of the people, in his coming forth from within the veil! He was as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon when its days are full; as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow that glitters on the bright clouds, and as the flower of roses in the spring of the year; as lilies by the rivers of waters, and as the branches of the frankincense tree in the time of summer. . . .

"When he put on the robes of state, and was arrayed in all his ornaments, when he went up to the holy altar, he adorned the forecourt of the Sanctuary. But when he received the pieces of the sacrifice

from the hands of the priests, and stood at the side of the altar, a crown of brethren round him, then was he like the young cedar on Lebanon, and they were round him like palm-trees, and all the sons of Aaron were in their splendid robes, and the gifts for the Lord in their hands, from the whole congregation of Israel. And, when he had finished the service at the altars, that he might do honour to the offering of the Most High, Almighty, he stretched forth his hand over the sacrifice, and poured out the blood of grapes; he poured it out at the foot of the altar, as a sweet-smelling savour unto the Most High, the King of all. Then shouted the sons of Aaron; with the silver trumpets of wondrous workmanship did they sound, and made a great noise to be heard, for a remembrance before the Most High. Then all the people, together, hasted, and fell down to the earth, upon their faces, to worship God, the Lord Almighty, the Most High. The singers also sang praises with their voices; with great variety of sounds was there made sweet melody. And the people besought the Lord, the Most High, by prayer before Him that is merciful, till the glorious exalting of the Lord was ended, and His worship was finished.

"Then he came down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the children of Israel, to give the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to glorify His name. And they bowed themselves down to worship the second time, that they might receive a blessing from the Most High."

Fear lest any calamity might have befallen Zacharias added to the rising excitement. He might have been ceremonially unclean, and the divine anger at the Holy Place being thus polluted, might have struck him down. The offering priest never remained longer than was necessary in so august a Presence. His appearance, at last, however, explained all. They could receive no blessing that day, and Zacharias could no longer minister in his course, for he was speechless; all he could do was to tell them by signs what had happened. Had they known it, his silence for the time was but the prelude to the lasting silence of the Law, of which he was a minister, now that Christ was about to come.

Having now no more to detain him at Jerusalem, Zacharias returned home, we presume, to Hebron. His journey, if it was in October, as seems likely, would lead him through the cheerful scenes of the grape harvest—a great event, even yet, in the Hebron district. Had it been in April, at the spring service, the stony hills, and deep red or yellow soil of the valleys through which he had to pass, would have been ablaze with bright colours; shrubs, grass, gay weeds, and wild-flowers, over all the uplands, and thickets, of varied blossom, sprinkled with sheets of white briar roses, in the hollows; the beautiful cyclamen peeping from under the gnarled roots of great trees, and from amidst the roadside stones. Towns of stone houses, of which the ruins still remain, rose, flat-roofed, from the hill-sides, or from their tops, in sight of each other, all the way. Fields with stone walls, now in the

autumn, lay idle after the harvest, or were being re-sown; but the vineyards, which spread far and wide, over valley and sloping height, resounded with voices, for the houses were well-nigh forsaken to gather the ripe grapes. Somewhere in Hebron, in its cradle of hills, three thousand feet above the neighbouring Mediterranean, lay the home of Zacharias, and there, some time in the next year, in accordance with the promise of the angel, Elisabeth bore a son—the future Baptist; and Zacharias received back his speech, on the glad day of the child getting its name—the eighth after its birth,—the day of its admission into the congregation of Israel by circumcision.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT TO MARY.

WHILE Zacharias and Elisabeth were rejoicing at their promised blessing, in their quiet home in the south, there lived in the village of Nazareth or Nazara, over a hundred miles to the north of them, a Jew of the name of Joseph, and a simple maiden named Mary, who was betrothed to him as his future wife. Though humble enough in position—for he was by trade a carpenter—Joseph was, in reality, of the noblest blood of his race, for he could claim descent from the ancient kings of his nation, and was the legal heir to the throne of David and Solomon.

It needs not surprise us that the representative of such an illustrious ancestry should be found in a station so obscure. In the book of Judges, we find a grandson of Moses reduced to engage himself as family priest, in Mount Ephraim, for a yearly wage of "ten shekels, a suit of apparel, and his victuals." At the present day, the green turban which marks descent from Mahomet is often worn in the East by the very poor, and even by beggars. In our own history, the glory of the once illustrious Plantagenets so completely waned, that the direct representative of Margaret Plantagenet, daughter and heiress of George Duke of Clarence, followed the trade of a cobbler in Newport, Shropshire, in 1637. Among the lineal descendants of Edmund of Woodstock, sixth son of Edward I., and entitled to quarter the royal arms, were a village butcher, and a keeper of a turnpike gate, and among the descendants of Thomas Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, fifth son of Edward III., was included the late sexton of a London church. The vicissitudes of the Jewish nation for century after century; its deportation to Babylon, and long suspension of national life; its succession of high-priestly rulers, after the return; its transition to the Asmonean line, and, finally, the reign of the Idumean house of Herod, with all the storm and turmoil which marked so many changes, had left, to use the figure of Isaiah, only a root in a dry ground, an humble citizen of Nazareth, as the heir of its ancient royalty.

In the same city lived a family, which, like that of Joseph, seems to have been long settled there. The names of the parents we do not know, but they had three daughters, one of whom, Mary, was betrothed to Joseph. The relation thus created was familiar to our own ancestors as late as the time of Shakespere, and was equivalent to a civil contract of marriage, to be duly followed by the religious rite. Among the Jews of Mary's day, it was even more of an actual engagement. The betrothal was formally made, with rejoicings, in the house of the bride, under a tent or slight canopy raised for the purpose. It was called the "making sacred," as the bride, thenceforth, was sacred to her husband, in the strictest sense. To make it legal, the bridegroom gave his betrothed a piece of money, or the worth of it, before witnesses, with the words, "Lo, thou art betrothed unto me," or by a formal writing, in which similar words, and the maiden's name, were given, and this, in the same way, was handed to her before witnesses. Betrothals were commonly arranged by the fathers, or in case of their being dead, by the mothers, or guardians, and the consent of any brothers the maiden might have, was required. In the earlier ages, verbal agreements, sometimes confirmed by oath, before witnesses, were most in use, but after the Return, written forms became the rule.

Though betrothal was virtually marriage, and could only be broken off by a formal "bill of divorcement," the betrothed did not at once go to her husband's house. To give her time for preparation, and to soften the pain of parting from her friends, or, perhaps, in part, to let them get a longer benefit of her household services, an interval elapsed before the final ceremony; it might be so many weeks, or months, or even a whole year.

It was now the sixth month from the appearance of Gabriel to Zacharias, and Mary's time of betrothal was passing quickly away in her family home at Nazareth. The future Herald had been pointed out, and now the advent of the Messiah Himself was to be announced, as silently, and with as little notice from men, for Christ, like the sun, rose in noiseless stillness.

A heart like that of Mary, full of religious thoughtfulness and emotion, must have been doubly earnest in the daily devotions which no Jew or Jewess neglected. Like all her people, the time of the morning offering, the hour of noon, and the time of the evening sacrifice, would find her in her private chamber in lowly prayer. At some such moment, the great event took place of which the narrative of St. Luke informs us.

In the sixth month, we are told, after the visit to Zacharias, Gabriel was sent from God to Mary, and having entered her chamber, where the presence of a man must have been startling at any time, but then especially,—stood before her with the usual salutation, to which he added the mysterious words, that she was highly favoured, and that the Lord was with her. Naturally troubled by such an interruption

and such words, she shows a characteristic of her calm, self-collected nature in being able to think and reason, as if undisturbed, what the salutation might mean. Whatever fear she has, speedily passes, before the soothing words of her visitor. He bids her lay aside her alarm; he has come to tell her that she has found favour, above all other women, with God, by being chosen as the future mother of the long-expected Messiah, who was to have the name of JESUS. "The Holy Ghost," he says, "shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore thy son shall be called the Son of God; and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." It would have been no more than human weakness, if doubts had risen at such an announcement, but these he sets to rest, if they were springing, by telling her that a miracle, no less wonderful than that which would happen with herself, had already been wrought upon her relative Elisabeth. Mary's answer is the ideal of dignified humility, and meek and reverend innocence:—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And presently she was alone.

Had the narrative of the miraculous conception occurred in the literature of a heathen nation, it would justly have raised doubts. But in the sober verses of the Gospels, written by Jews, it takes a far different character. The idea was altogether foreign to the Jewish mind. The Hebrew doctrine of the Unity of God, and of the infinite elevation of the Divine Being above man, the profound regard of the Jews for the married state, and their abhorrence of unwedded life, make it impossible to imagine how such a thought could ever have risen among them. The improbability of its being invented by a Jew is heightened by the fact, that, though lofty thoughts of the nature of the Messiah were not wanting in some Israelites, the almost universal belief was that He was to be simply a man, who would receive miraculous endowments, on His formal consecration as Messiah.

What best to do in a position so mysterious may well have troubled Mary's heart. The angel had told her that her relative Elisabeth, as well as herself, had been favoured of God in connection with the expected Messiah, and it is a natural trait, in one whose strength of mind, and calm decision of character, had shown itself even in her Visitation, that she now determined to go to her kinswoman and confer with her, though the distance between them was over a hundred miles.

What were the thoughts of Mary in her solitary journey—for solitary she must have been, with such a secret in her heart, even if she travelled with a company? She likely went on foot, for it was the custom of her people, and, moreover, she was poor. The intimation made to her was one which she could hardly grasp in its full significance. Her Son was to sit upon the throne of His father David, and

reign over the house of Jacob, founding a kingdom which should endure for ever. But this was only what she had expected, as a Jewess, for, like all her nation, she thought of the Messiah as a Jewish king, who should restore the long-lost glories of her race, and make Israel triumphant over all the heathen. She had been told, as well, however, that her child, from its birth, should be called the Son of the Highest, and the Son of God. The human mind is slow to grasp great truths, and needs to grow into a comprehension of their meaning: it cannot receive them in their fulness till it has been educated, step by step, to understand them. Long years after this she only partially realized the import of such words. In her Son's youth she was perplexed to know what was meant by His answer, when He stayed behind in the Temple, and years after that she failed, once again, to realize her true relations to Him. Nor does she seem to have risen to the full sublimity of her position, and of His, while He lived, though the deathless love of a mother for her child brought her to the foot of the Cross. But in such slowness to believe, and such abidingly imperfect conceptions, she was only on a footing with those who enjoyed habitual intercourse with Him, hearing His words, and seeing His miracles, day by day; for even the disciples remained, to the end, Jewish peasants, in their ideas respecting Him, thinking that He was only a political deliverer of the nation. Preoccupation of the mind by fixed opinions, leads to a wrong reading of any evidence. We unconsciously distort facts, or invent them, to support our favourite theories, and see everything through their medium, like the musician, who held that God worked six days, and rested on the seventh, because there are seven notes in music; or as in the instance fancied by Helvetius, where a loving couple had no doubt that two objects, visible on the disc of the moon, were two lovers bending towards each other, while a clergyman had as little, that they were the two steeples of a cathedral. Our conclusions are determined largely by our predispositions, and our prejudices, or prejudgments, in great measure monopolize our faculties. We are not so much ignorant as perverted. We see truth through a prism. We are so entirely the creatures of education, of the opinions of our neighbours and of our family, and of the thousand influences of life, that the only way we can hope to see truth in its own white and unbroken light is, as Christ tells us, by our becoming little children. With Mary and the disciples this came in the end, but not till then. The influence expressed in Seneca's apophthegm—*Sordet cognita veritas*—blinded their eyes, in part, while our Lord was still with them; but He rose to His divine grandeur as He left them. In the Acts and the Epistles the disciples breathe a far loftier spirituality, in their conception of the work and Person of Christ, than in the Gospels, and Mary, beyond question, was not behind men with whose lot she from that time cast in her own.

Her meeting with Elisabeth was naturally marked by the deep emotion of both, and we owe to it the earliest and grandest of our

hymns, the *Magnificat*. Greeted by Elisabeth as the future mother of her Lord, Mary breaks out, with the poetical fervour of Eastern nature, in a strain of exalted feeling. The rhythmical expression into which she falls was only what might have been expected from one imbued, as all Jewish minds were, with the style and imagery of the Old Testament. Like Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, or Judith, she utters a song of joy:—

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour;
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden:
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done to me great things:
And Holy is His name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with His arm;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts
He hath put down the mighty from their seats;
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen His servant Israe
In remembrance of *His* mercy;
As He spake to our fathers,
To Abraham and to His seed, for ever.

The whole hymn is a mosaic of Old Testament imagery and language, and shows a mind so coloured by the sacred writings of her people that her whole utterance becomes, spontaneously, as by a second nature, an echo of that of prophets and saints. It is such as we might have expected from the lips of some ideal Puritan maiden, in those days in our own history, when men were so deeply read in the oracles of God, that their ordinary conversation fell into Scriptural phrases and allusions, and their whole life was coloured by the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Mary, like them, must have lived in a constant realization of the presence, and special providence, of One, with whose gracious communications to her people she had thus filled her whole thoughts. A Jewish puritanism, of the loftiest and most spiritual type, must have been the very atmosphere in which she moved, and in which her child was hereafter to be trained.

The high intellectual emotion and eloquence of the *Magnificat* reveal a nature of no common mould, as its intense religious fervour shows spiritual characteristics of the noblest type. But the strain throughout is strictly limited to what we might have expected in a Jewish maiden. It is intensely national when it is not personal. She rejoices in God, and magnifies His name, for having honoured her so greatly, notwithstanding her low estate. He has done great things for her, which will make all generations pronounce her blessed. He has thus favoured her because she feared Him, for His mercy is on such, from generation to generation. As of old, when He shewed strength with His arm, and scattered the proud, and put down the

mighty from their thrones, to deliver or exalt His weak and lowly people, so, now, He has exalted her, and disappointed the hopes of the great ones: He has filled her, who was like the hungry, with good things, and has sent away the rich empty, who expected His favours. Through her He has holpen Israel, in remembrance of His promise to her fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed, for ever, that He would be their God. Her son was to be the Anointed who should redeem Israel out of all its troubles. As a descendant of David, she doubtless thinks of Herod, sitting, as an Edomite intruder, on the throne rightfully due to her own race, yet, as an Israelite in the best sense, the redemption of her people goes beyond the merely patriotic and political, to the restoration of that primitive loyalty to the God of their fathers which she cherished in her own breast, but the spirit of which her people had well-nigh lost, amidst all their steadfastness in the outer forms.

It is easy to understand how willingly Mary lingered in Hebron, and that she was loath to return to Nazareth sooner than was necessary. Elisabeth knew her great secret and her innocence, but at Nazareth she would be among her neighbours, who might not credit her assurances; and she must some day, as late as possible, break the matter to her betrothed. It is no wonder to find that three months passed, before she could venture to turn her face homeward once more.

Her position on her return, indeed, exposed her to a trial, great above all others to a virtuous woman. Conscious of perfect purity, she is suspected of the reverse by him to whom her troth is plighted; but He who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb relieved her from her troubles by making known to Joseph the mysterious truth. As a just man—which was a current expression of the time for a strict observer of the Law—and yet unwilling to expose her to public shame, he had made up his mind to divorce her formally, by a written "bill," duly attested by witnesses, but being divinely instructed that his fears were groundless, he freed her from all future trouble by taking her home as his wife.

Legend, as might have been expected, was early busy with the story of Mary and Joseph.

We are told that Joseph, though a carpenter, was made a priest in the Temple, because of his knowledge of the Law, and his fame for holiness. Mary was his second wife, and found herself, on her coming home, in a circle of four sons and two daughters, left by her predecessor—the family known in the Gospels as the brethren and sisters of our Lord. Mary, as has been said, was the daughter of Joachim and Anna. On her father's side, she came from Nazareth; on her mother's, from Bethlehem. Joachim was a simple, God-fearing man, a shepherd, of the tribe of Judah, and married Anna when he was twenty years of age. Twenty years passed, however, without their having a child, and both Joachim and Anna grieved sorely at their

loneliness. At the Temple, Joachim found himself ordered away from among those who had children, and his offerings refused, and Anna, also, had to bear reproach from the women of her people.

Then "Anna wept sore, and prayed to God. And when the great day of the Lord came, Judith, her maid, said to her, How long will thy soul mourn? It becomes thee not to be sad, for the great day of the Lord has come. Take thy head-dress, which the needlewoman gave me; it is not allowed me to put it on thee, because I am thy maid, and thou comest of kings." Then was Anna much troubled, and laid aside her mourning, and adorned her head, and put on her bridal robes, and went into the garden about the ninth hour. There she saw a laurel-tree, and sat down beneath it, and prayed thus to God:—"God of my fathers, bless me and hear my cry, as Thou heardest Sarah, and blessedst her by giving her a son, Isaac." While, now, she was looking up to heaven, she saw the nest of a sparrow in the laurel-tree, and she sighed and said, "Woe is me, woe is me, who have no child! Why was I born that I should have become accursed before the children of Israel, and despised, and scorned, and driven away from the temple of the Lord my God? Woe is me, to what can I liken myself? Not to the birds of the heavens, for they have young; not to the senseless beasts, for they are fruitful before Thee, O Lord; not to the creatures of the waters, for they have young; not to the earth, for it brings forth fruits in their seasons, and blesses Thee, O Lord."

Then an angel came and told her she should have a child. And Anna said, "As the Lord God liveth, be it male or female that I bear, I vow it to the Lord, and it shall serve Him all the days of its life." And Anna bore a daughter, and called it Mary, as the angel had commanded.

When six months had passed, Anna put Mary on the ground, and found that she could totter a few steps. Then she said, "As the Lord liveth, thou shalt never put thy foot on the earth again till I have led thee into the Temple of the Lord". At the end of the first year, Joachim made a great feast, and called to it the priests and scribes, and the elders, and many friends. And he brought the maiden to the priests, and they blessed her, and said, "God of our fathers, bless this child, and give her a name which shall be known through all generations. And all the people said, Amen."

We are then told that Mary was taken to the Temple when she was three years old, having lived till then in a sanctuary made for her in her father's house. And while Joachim and Anna were at the foot of the fifteen steps that led up to the Temple courts, and were changing their soiled travelling raiment for clean and fitting dress, as the custom was, Mary climbed the steps alone, and never looked back, but kept her face towards the altar. And she was left in the Temple, that she might grow up with the other virgins.

From this time till she was twelve years old, it is said, she lived in

the Temple, her graces keeping pace with her years. From the morning till the third hour, she remained in prayer, and from that till the ninth she was busied with spinning. Then she betook herself once more to prayer, till an angel each day came with food for her. Her betrothal to Joseph is related in great detail, but we forbear to quote it.

Tradition, to which we owe these beautiful legends, has delighted to speak of the Virgin's appearance and character. She was more given to prayer, we read, than any round her, brighter in the knowledge of God's law, and perfectly humble; she delighted to sing the Psalms of David with a melodious voice, and all loved her for her kindness and modesty.

It is impossible to trust to the descriptions of Mary's person, but it is interesting to know how remote generations imagined her. She was in all things serious and earnest, says one old tradition, spoke little, and only what was to the purpose; she was very gentle, and showed respect and honour to all. She was of middle height, though some say she was rather above it. She spoke to all with a prudent frankness, soberly, without confusion, and always pleasantly. She had a fair complexion, blonde hair, and bright hazel eyes. Her eyebrows were arched and dark, her nose well proportioned, her lips ruddy and full of kindness when she spoke. Her face was long rather than round, and her hands and fingers were finely shaped. She had no pride, but was simple, and wholly free from deceit. Without effeminacy, she was far from forwardness. In her clothes which she herself made, she was content with the natural colours.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

It might have been expected that Mary's child would have been born in the city of Nazareth, where Joseph and Mary lived, but circumstances over which they had no control made a distant village the birthplace.

The Jewish nation had paid tribute to Rome, through their rulers, since the days of Pompey; and the methodical Augustus, who now reigned, and had to restore order and soundness to the finances of the empire, after the confusion and exhaustion of the civil wars, took good care that this obligation should neither be forgotten nor evaded. He was accustomed to require a census to be taken periodically in every province of his vast dominions, that he might know the number of soldiers he could levy in each, and the amount of taxes due to the treasury. So exact was he, that he wrote out with his own hand a summary of statistics of the whole empire, including the citizens and allies in arms, in all the kingdoms and provinces, with their

tributes and taxes. Three separate surveys of the empire for such fiscal and military ends are recorded as ordered—in the 726th, 746th, and 767th years of the city of Rome, respectively: the first, long before the birth of Christ; the third, in our Lord's youth; but the second, very near the time when He must have been born.

In an empire embracing the then known world, such a census could hardly have been made simultaneously, or in any short or fixed time; more probably it was the work of years, in successive provinces or kingdoms. Sooner or later, however, even the dominions of vassal kings like Herod had to furnish the statistics demanded by their master. He had received his kingdom on the footing of a subject, and grew more entirely dependent on Augustus as years passed, asking his sanction at every turn for steps he proposed to take. He would, thus, be only too ready to meet his wish, by obtaining the statistics he sought, as may be judged from the fact that in one of the last years of his life, just before Christ's birth, he made the whole Jewish nation take a solemn oath of allegiance to the Emperor as well as to himself.

It is quite probable that the mode of taking the required statistics was left very much to Herod, at once to show respect to him before his people, and from the known opposition of the Jews to anything like a general numeration, even apart from the taxation to which it was designed to lead. At the time to which the narrative refers, a simple registration seems to have been made, on the old Hebrew plan of enrolling by families in their ancestral districts, of course for future use; and thus it passed over quietly. The very different results, when it was followed by a general taxation, some years later, will hereafter be seen.

The proclamation having been made through the land, Joseph had no choice but to go to Bethlehem, the city of David, the place in which his family descent, from the house and lineage of David, required him to be inscribed. It must, apparently, have been near the close of the year 749 of Rome, or at the opening of 750; but winter in Palestine is not necessarily severe, for the flowers spring up after the November rains, and flocks are often driven out to the pastures, as St. Luke tells us was the case at the time of Christ's birth. Unwilling to leave her behind in a home so new to her, Joseph took Mary with him: the two journeying most likely, as tradition has painted—Joseph afoot, with Mary on an ass at his side. There were by-paths interlacing and crossing, all over the country, and they may have chosen some of these, but if they kept to the travelled road, which it is most likely they did, both for safety and company, we can follow their progress even now.

Passing down the little valley of Nazareth, they would find themselves crossing the rich plain of Esdraelon, not then, as now, half tilled and well-nigh unpeopled, but covered with cities and villages, full of teeming life and human activities. Galilee, according to Jo-

sephus, contained in those days, two hundred and four cities and villages, the smallest of which numbered above fifteen thousand inhabitants. It is calculated, indeed, that it had a population of about fifteen hundred to the square mile, which is a third more than the number in Lancashire, crowded as it is with large and densely peopled towns. Speaking of the district just north of Galilee, Captain Burton tells us that, to one standing on a peak of Lebanon, overlooking it, "the land must, in many places, have appeared to be one continuous town;" and in the highlands of Syria, still north of this, in the region of Hamah, there are the ruins of three hundred and sixty-five towns, so that Mr. Drake had good ground for thinking the Arabs right in saying, "that a man might formerly have travelled for a year in this district, and never have slept twice in the same village."

Leaving, on the left, the rounded height of Tabor, and the villages of Nain and Endor, up among the hills, the road stretched directly south to Jezreel, once Ahab's capital, on a gentle swell of the rich plain of Esdraelon. On their way they would pass through a landscape of busy cities and towns, varied by orchards, vineyards, gardens, and fields, for every available spot was cultivated, to the very tops of the hills. The mountains of Gilboa, where Saul perished, lay a little east of Jezreel as they went on, and then came Engannim, with its spring, on the edge of the hill-country of Samaria. Dothan, with its rich pastures, where Joseph had found his brethren so many ages before, would soon be seen on their right; and, before long, their winding road, rising and falling among continuous hills, would bring them to Samaria itself, then just rebuilt by Herod, with such magnificence, that he had given it the name of Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augusta, in honour of his imperial master. Sychar or Shechem, with its lovely neighbourhood, would be their resting-place on the second day, for it is nearly midway between Judea and Galilee; and though the distance between the two was often reckoned as only a three days' journey, it was not uncommon to lengthen it to four. As the chief town of the Samaritans, Sychar would hardly offer hospitality to travellers with their faces towards the hated Jerusalem. Joseph and Mary, as was the custom with Jews passing through, would, therefore, avoid the town, and pass the night in what shelter they could find at Jacob's springs,—or Jacob's well, as our version has it,—not far off, eating provisions they had brought with them, to avoid tasting food defiled by the touch of a Samaritan, and drinking only the water from the springs. The beauty of the valley, with its swelling heights of Ebal and Gerizim, separated only by a few hundred paces, and its rich upland glens, opening on each side beyond—the crown and water-shed of Central Palestine—would have little interest to them, for it was Samaritan ground. They would breathe freely only when they had passed the heights of Akrabbim, the border ridge between Samaria and Judea, and had once more set foot on the holy soil of Israel.

Once in Judea, its bleak and bare hills were hallowed, at each opening of the landscape, by the sight of spots sacred to every Jew. Shiloh would greet them first, where Hannah came to pray before the Lord; then Gilgal, where her son sat to judge Israel. Their way would next pass through the valley of Baca, of which the Psalmist had sung, "Passing through the valley of tears, they make it rich in springs; and the latter rain covers it with blessings." The road winds on from this, through the district town Gophna, past the venerable Bethel, with all its memories, and past Ramah, in Benjamin, where Jeremiah had pictured Rachel weeping for her children, slain or carried off by the Babylonian conqueror. Over against it rose Gibeon, high on its hill, where Solomon worshipped; and an hour later they would pass Mizpeh, on its lonely height, where Samuel raised his memorial stone Ebenezer. And then, at last, after having passed from one holy place to another, their feet would stand within the gates of Jerusalem.

Bethlehem, the end of their journey, lay about six miles south of Jerusalem, on the east of the main road to Hebron. It covered the upper slope, and part of the top, of a narrow ridge of grey Jura limestone, of about a mile in length—one of the countless heights, seamed by narrow valleys, which make up the hill country of Judea. Its narrow, steep streets lay no less than 2,538 Paris feet above the Mediterranean, and looked out over a sea of hills, bare and rocky,—one of them, about three miles to the east, the peak of the Frank mountain, Jebel Fureidis, now bare, but then covered with the new fortifications of Herodium, in the circuit of which the hated tyrant Herod was soon to find his tomb. On the east, the mountains of Moab rose against the horizon like a purple wall, the barren and desolate uplands of the wilderness of Judea lying between, and stretching far to the south. The ridge of Bethlehem itself is still covered, on its northern side, as all the hills around must have been in Mary's day, with bold, sweeping lines of terraces, which descend, like gigantic steps, to the lower valleys, and bear tier on tier of fig-trees, olives, pomegranates, and vines; the vines overhanging the terrace banks, and relieving the eye from the dazzling glare of the white limestone rocks and soil. The ridge, as a whole, breaks down, abruptly, into deep valleys, on the north, south, and east, passing into gorges, which descend, in the distance, to the Dead Sea on the east, and to the coast lowlands on the west. In a little plain close under the town, to the eastward, are some vineyards and barley-fields, in which Ruth came to glean in the early days of Israel, beside a gentle brook which still murmurs through them.

It was to Bethlehem that Joseph and Mary were coming, the town of Ruth and Boaz, and the early home of their own great forefather David. As they approached it from Jerusalem, they would pass, at the last mile, a spot sacred to Jewish memory, where the light of Jacob's life went out, when his first love, Rachel, died, and was

buried, as her tomb still shows, "in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem."

The ascent to the town, over the dusty glare of the grey limestone hills, was the last of the journey, and it is well if Mary did not find it, in parts, as other travellers have found it, before and since, so slippery as to make it seem safer to alight and go up on foot. A quarter of a mile to the north of the town-gate she would pass the well, from which, as she had heard from infancy, her ancestor David had so longed to drink. Presently, passing through the low gate, she and Joseph were in the mountain town or village of Bethlehem.

Travelling in the East has always been very different from Western ideas. As in all thinly-settled countries, private hospitality, in early times, supplied the want of inns, but it was the peculiarity of the East that this friendly custom continued through a long series of ages. On the great roads through barren or uninhabited parts, the need of shelter led, very early, to the erection of rude and simple buildings, of varying size, known as khans, which offered the wayfarer the protection of walls and a roof, and water, but little more. The smaller structures consisted of sometimes only a single empty room, on the floor of which the traveller might spread his carpet for sleep; the larger ones, always built in a hollow square, enclosing a court for the beasts, with water in it for them and their masters. From immemorial antiquity it has been a favourite mode of benevolence to raise such places of shelter, as we see so far back as the times of David, when Chimham built a great khan near Bethlehem, on the caravan road to Egypt.

But while it has long been thus, in special circumstances, the Eastern sense of the sacredness of hospitality, which was felt deeply by the Jews, made inns, in one sense, or even khans, where travellers provided for themselves, unnecessary in any peopled place. The simplicity of Eastern life, which has fewer wants than the Western mind can well realize, aided by universal hospitality, opened private houses everywhere to the traveller. The ancient Jew, like the modern Arab, held it a reflection on a community if a passing wayfarer was not made some one's guest. To bring water at once, to wash the traveller's feet, dusty with the Eastern sandals, was an act of courtesy which it showed a churlish spirit to omit. Food and lodging, for himself and his beasts, if he had any, were provided, and he was regarded as under the sacred protection of his host. At the time of Christ this primitive simplicity still continued. The Rabbis constantly urge the religious merit of hospitality, promising Paradise as its reward, and ranking the kindly reception of strangers higher than to have been honoured by an appearance of the Shechinah itself. Its universal recognition as a natural duty, in His age, is often found even in the discourses of our Lord.

We may feel sure, therefore, that it was not an "inn" where Joseph and Mary found shelter after their journey, though that word

is used in our English version. In the only two other places in which it occurs, it refers to a friendly "guest-chamber" in a private house. At such a time, however, when strangers had arrived from every part, the household to which they looked for entertainment had already opened their guest-chamber to earlier comers, and the only accommodation that could be offered was a place, half kitchen and half stable, which was simply one of the countless natural hollows or caves in the hill-side, against which the house had been built, as is still seen frequently in Palestine.

How long Joseph and Mary had been in Bethlehem before Jesus was born is impossible to say, for time is of no value to Orientals, and a stay of a few weeks more or less would be little regarded. St. Luke merely tells us that "while they were there" Mary gave birth to the Saviour. Milton, following the immemorial tradition of the Church, sings:

"It was the winter wild
While the heaven-born child,
All meanly wrapt, in the rude manger lies;
Nature, in awe to him,
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize;
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun."

But the poet's fancy alone creates the bleak wintryness of the time, for the outlying shepherds on the hills around were living witnesses of the reverse. Yet it seems most probable that the great event took place between December, 749, of Rome, and February, 750; and the only reason why there can be any hesitation in supposing December 25th to have been the very day is the natural doubt whether the date could have been handed down so exactly, and the fear lest the wish to associate the birth of the Redeemer with the return of the sun, which made Christmas be early spoken of as the "day of the triumphant sun," may have led to its having been chosen.

The simplicity of St. Luke's narrative is very striking. An event, compared with which all others in human history are insignificant, is recorded in a few words, without any attempt at exaggeration or embellishment. The Apocryphal Gospels, on the contrary, abound in miraculous details, for the most part trifling and childish. Some features in their narratives, however, are not wanting in naturalness or even sublimity, and, at the least, they have the merit of showing how the early Church painted for itself the scene of the Nativity. "It happened," say these old legends, "as Mary and Joseph were going up towards Bethlehem, that the time came when Jesus should be born, and Mary said to Joseph, 'Take me down from my ass,' and he took her down from her ass, and said to her, 'Where shall I take thee, for there is no inn here?' Then he found a cave near the grave of Rachel, the wife of the Patriarch Jacob—the mother of Joseph and Benjamin; and light never entered the cave,

but it was always filled with darkness. And the sun was then just going down. Into this he led her, and left his two sons beside her, and went out toward Bethlehem to seek help. But when Mary entered the cave it was presently filled with light, and beams, as if of the sun, shone around; and thus it continued, day and night, while she remained in it.

"In this cave the child was born, and the angels were round Him at His birth, and worshipped the New-born, and said, 'Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth and good-will to men.' Meanwhile Joseph was wandering about, seeking help. And when he looked up to heaven, he saw that the pole of the heavens stood still, and the birds of the air stopped in the midst of their flight, and the sky was darkened. And looking on the earth he saw a dish full of food, prepared, and workmen, resting round it, with their hands in the dish to eat, and those who were stretching out their hands did not take any of the food, and those who were lifting their hands to their mouths did not do so, but the faces of all were turned upwards. And he saw sheep which were being driven along, and the sheep stood still, and the shepherd lifted his hand to strike them, but it remained uplifted. And he came to a spring, and saw the goats with their mouths touching the water, but they did not drink, but were under a spell, for all things at that moment were turned from their course."

But if wonders such as these were wanting, the birth of the Saviour was not without attestations of His divine glory. If His birth was mean on earth below, it was celebrated with hallelujahs by the heavenly host in the air above. The few fields in the valley below Bethlehem have, likely, been always too valuable to be used for pasture, but the slopes and heights of the hills around were then, as they had been in David's time, and are still, the resort of shepherds, with their numerous flocks, which supplied the requirements of the neighbouring Temple. The "Onomasticon," of Eusebius informs us that about "a thousand paces from Bethlehem stands a tower called Eder—that is, the tower of the shepherds—a name which foreshadowed the angelic appearance to the shepherds, at the birth of our Lord." Jewish tradition has preserved the record of a tower of this name, in this locality, where the flocks of sheep for the Temple sacrifices were pastured; and there still remain, at the given distance, eastwards from Bethlehem, the ruins of a church which Helena, the mother of Constantine, caused to be built on the spot believed to have been that at which the heavenly vision was seen.

On the night of the birth of Christ, a group of shepherds lay out, with their flocks, on the hill-side, in the neighbourhood of this ancient watch-tower. Some of them were keeping their turn of watching while the others slept, for shepherds relieved each other by watches, as our sailors do, at fixed hours. St. Luke expressly tells us that they were "watching the watches of the night." To have received such surpassing honour from above, they must have been

members, though poor and humble, of that true Israel which included Mary and Joseph, Zacharias and Elisabeth, Simeon and Anna —the representatives, in those dark days, of the saints of their nation in its brighter past. They must have been men looking out, in their simple way, towards the invisible and eternal, and seeking that kingdom of God for themselves which was one day, as they believed, to be revealed in their nation at large. Only that mind which has sympathy with external nature can receive in their true significance the impressions it is fitted to convey, and only the heart which has sympathy with spiritual things can recognize their full meaning. Poetic sensibility is required in the one case, and religious in the other. In each it is the condition of sincere emotion. The stillness over hill and valley, broken only by the bleating of the sheep; the unclouded brightness of the Syrian sky, with its innumerable stars; and the associations of these mountain pastures, dear to every Jew, as the scene of David's youth, were over and around them. And now, to quote the beautiful narrative of St. Luke, "lo, an angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all the people For unto you is born, this day, in the City of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be the sign unto you: ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host, praising God and saying—

> 'Glory to God in the highest,
> And on earth peace,
> Good-will toward men.' "

With this ever-memorable anthem—the first and last melody of heaven ever heard by mortal ears—the light faded from the hills, as the angels went away into heaven, and left earth once more in the shadow of night, knowing and thinking nothing of that which so supremely interested distant worlds. Wondering at such a vision, and full of simple trust, the shepherds had only one thought—to see the babe and its mother for themselves. Climbing the hill, therefore, with eager haste, they hurried to Bethlehem, and there found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger, as had been told them.

No details are given: no heightening of the picture of this first act of reverence to the new-born Saviour. Nor are they needed. The lowliness of the visitors, the pure image of the Virgin Mother and her Child, are better left in their own simplicity. Infancy is for ever dignified by the manger of Bethlehem: womanhood is ennobled to its purest ideal in Mary: man, as such, receives abiding honour, in the earliest accepted homage to her Son being that of the simple poor.

A great teacher has pointed some striking lessons on the way in which the whole incident was received, as St. Luke relates, by those immediately concerned. The shepherds spread abroad the story, with hearts full of grateful adoration; the hearers wonder at it, but Mary ponders in her heart all that had been told her. "There were more virgins in Israel, more even of the tribe of David, than she," says the great preacher; "but she was the Chosen of God. It was natural, and it is easy to understand, that when a second appearance of angels, like that which she had already herself experienced, was seen, she should ponder in her heart their words, which concerned her so nearly. But, if we ask ourselves—was this pondering the words in her heart already the true faith that carries the blessing,—the fruitful seed of a personal relation to the Saviour?—did Mary already believe, firmly and immovably, that the Saviour of the world should see the light of life through her?—the Gospels leave us too clearly to think the opposite. There was a time, long after this, when Christ was already a Teacher, when she wavered between Him and His brethren who did not believe in Him; when she went out with them to draw Him away from His course, and bring Him back to her narrower circle of home life, as one who was hardly in His right mind. Firm, unwavering trust, that knows no passing cloud, is a work of time with all who have an inner personal nearness to the Saviour; and it was so with Mary. She reached it only, like us all, through manifold doubts and struggles of heart, by that grace from above which roused her, ever, anew, and led her on from step to step."

CHAPTER X.

AT BETHLEHEM.

The first two months of the life of Christ, if not a longer time, were spent quietly in Bethlehem. That great event in a Hebrew household, His circumcision, marked the eighth day from His birth. To dedicate their children to the God of Israel in His appointed way, and thus at once give them "a portion in Israel," and set them apart from the nations by this sacred token, was a duty which no Jewish parent would for a moment dare to neglect. "On the eighth day," says the Book of Jubilees, "shalt thou circumcise thy boy, for on that day were Abraham and the people of his house circumcised. And no one may dare to change the day, nor go a day beyond the eight days, for it is an everlasting law, established and graven on the tablets of heaven. And he who does it not belongs not to the children of the promise, but to the children of destruction. Sons of Belial are they who do it not." The infant Saviour was in all probability carried on the legal day to the Temple, as it was so near, for the performance of the rite,—for Joseph and Mary, like all other Jews,

would think a religious act doubly sacred within the hallowed courts of Mount Zion. Custom, however, would allow its being done in the local synagogue, or in the humble house of prayer, in Bethlehem itself, or even in the house in which Mary and Joseph lodged.

The name Mary's child received had already been fixed at the Annunciation, and was formally given at the circumcision, in accordance with Jewish customs in reference to male infants. Its association with such a strictly Jewish rite made it the symbol of the child's formal admission into the congregation of Israel, of which he was henceforth a member. The infant Jesus was now an acknowledged Israelite.

Thirty-three days more had to elapse, in accordance with Jewish custom, before Mary could visit the Temple, or even go outside her dwelling, or touch anything made sacred by being consecrated to God. Including the circumcision week, the Jewish mother had to pass forty days of seclusion after the birth of a son, and sixty six after that of a daughter, before she could again take part in common life. After this long delay, she might appear in the Holy Place, to thank God for her preservation, and to receive from the priest the legal rite of purification.

When, at last, the day of her long-desired visit to the Temple came, Mary, with her child, had to present themselves in the Court of the Women as soon as the morning incense had been offered, and the nine blasts of the Temple trumpets had given the signal for morning prayer. The road from Bethlehem ran along the western side of the hill which overlooks Mount Zion from the south,—that on which Pompey, sixty years before, had pitched his camp—a defilement of the holy soil never since forgotten. Passing Herod's great amphitheatre, with its heathen ornaments,—a sight as revolting to a Jewess as was the remembrance of the bloody games celebrated in the circus within—Mary would go up the Valley of the Giants, and at the further end of it the full splendour of the city and Temple would be before her. The long sweep of the valley of Hinnom ran, bending westward, to the valley of the Kidron, with the royal gardens where the two valleys met, and mansions and palaces rising on the hills beyond. Over Ophel rose the dazzling whiteness of the Royal Porch of the Temple, a structure longer and higher than York Cathedral, built upon a solid mass of masonry, almost equal in height to the tallest of our church spires. Passing up the northern arm of Hinnom, her road skirted the pools of Gihon, shining, as she looked at them, in the morning light, and wound round to the Gennath Gate, under the shadow of the great towers beyond the palace of Herod, on the line of the oldest of the city walls. These fortresses had all been built by Herod to overawe Jerusalem, and had been named by him, the one, after his friend Hippicus, the next, after his brother Phasael, and the third, after his wife Mariamne, whom he had murdered, but could not forget. On the north-east, the colossal, eight-sided Psephi-

nos, with its double crown of breastworks and battlements, looked down on the city, and all four glittered in the early light, and rose high into the clear blue of the sky. Mary was now within the walls of Jerusalem, and had to thread her way through the narrow streets of the lower town, and, after crossing the bridge over the valley, to Mount Moriah, would at last reach the eastern side of the Temple, where the Golden Gate, at the head of the long flight of steps that led to the valley of the Kidron, opened into the Court of the Women.

She would, doubtless, be early enough on her way to hear the three trumpet blasts which announced the opening of the outer gate, long before the call to prayer. The earlier she came, the less chance would there be of her meeting anything on the way that might defile her, and prevent her entering the Temple. Women on her errand commonly rode to the Temple on oxen, that the body of so huge a beast between them and the ground might prevent any chance of defilement from passing over a sepulchre on the road, and, doubtless, she road either an ass or an ox, as was the custom.

While the mothers who were coming that morning for purification gradually gathered, Mary would have to wait outside the lofty gate of the Court of the Israelites, known as that of Nicanor, because the head and hands of the Syrian general of that name, slain in battle by Judas Maccabæus, had been hung up on it in triumph. She had doubtless often heard, among the household stories of her childhood, how the haughty enemy of her people wagged his hand, each day, towards Judea and Jerusalem, with the words, "Oh! when will it be in my power to lay them waste?" and how the hand that had thus been lifted against the holy place in blasphemy, had been exposed on the gate before her in shame. It was the greatest of all the Temple gates: greater even than the outer gate cast of it, known as the Beautiful, from its being covered with massy silver and gold, richly carved, or from its being made of Corinthian brass, elaborately chased, and of far higher value than even gold. It was known also as the Agrippa Gate, for over its eastern, or outer side, glittered a gigantic Roman eagle, underneath which Herod had inscribed the name of his friend Vipsanius Agrippa, the friend and son-in-law of Augustus. A flight of fifteen steps, in crescent shape, formed the approach to it, and marked the height of the Court of the Men, above that of the Women. The gate, itself, stood at the inner end of a massive structure, fifty cubits in depth, with porticoes at the eastern side, and chambers above it, under which Joseph doubtless waited with Mary, for husbands could enter the Court of the Women with their wives, though no woman could pass into the Court of the Men. They must have shuddered as they passed underneath the great golden eagle, for it was the hateful symbol of idolatry and Roman domination, for destroying which, in the riots before Herod's death, so many of the flower of Jerusalem were soon to die.

After a time, the Nicanor Gate was opened, and the offerings of all the women who had come for purification, which was much the same as churching is with us, were taken from them, by the Levites, into the Court of the Priests, to be burned on the altar, after the morning sacrifice. Mary might have had either a lamb, or a pair of young pigeons, for the rite; but Joseph was poor, and she was contented with the cheaper offering of doves, very probably bought from the Temple officer, who kept flocks of doves, purchased with the funds of the Temple, and sold to those who were about to offer, at the market price. Or she may have got them in the outer court, which had been turned into a noisy bazaar, by great numbers of money-changers, sellers of doves, and even dealers in oxen, who sought the custom of the crowds frequenting the Temple, contrary to the very idea of such a place. Meanwhile, the assembled mothers spent the interval before their offering was laid on the altar, in giving thanks to God for their recovery. After a time, a priest came with some of the blood, and, having sprinkled them with it, pronounced them clean, and thus the rite ended.

Her own "purification," however, was not the only object of this first visit to the Temple, after the birth of her Son. In the patriarchal times, the firstborn son of each family seems to have been the assistant of the Family Head in the priestly services of the household. Jewish tradition has always supported this belief, and the ancient commentators appeal to various passages in support of it. A great change was, however, introduced by Moses. Aaron and his sons were set apart, with the whole tribe of Levi, as the only priests, and thus the priestly services of the firstborn were no longer required. That they had originally been claimed, however, was still kept before the people by a law erclong announced at Sinai, that the eldest male, of both man and beast, was sacred to God. Of the lower creatures, some were to be offered on the altar; others, redeemed at a fixed price. The firstborn son was to be presented before God in the Temple, and consecrated to His service, a month after birth, but a money payment of not more than five shekels, and, in the case of a parent's poverty, of less, was accepted as a "redemption" of the rights this involved. Rabbinical law, in the time of Mary, had made a refinement on the original statute of Moses, no child being required to be "presented to the Lord" who was in any way maimed, or defective, or had any blemish, so as to be unfit for a priest—a rule which throws an incidental light on Mary's child, such as might have been expected. He must have been, in all points, without physical blemish.

The details of the ceremony, as observed in the days of our Lord, have not come down to us, but may, doubtless, be illustrated by those still in force, for the "redemption of the firstborn" is still observed by strict Jews as the legacy of immemorial tradition. The Hebrew father invites ten friends and a Rabbi, who must be a Cohen, that is, one reputed to belong to the house of Aaron,—to his house, on the

thirty-first day after the child's birth. The infant is then brought in by him and laid on the table before the Rabbi, with a sum of money —which, in England, if the father be ordinarily well-to-do, generally amounts to about twelve shillings. He then formally tells the Rabbi that his wife, who is an Israelite, has borne, as her firstborn, a male child, which, therefore, he now gives to the Rabbi, as the representative of God. "Which would you, then, rather do?" asks the Rabbi, "give up your firstborn, who is the first child of his mother, to Jehovah, or redeem him for five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is five gera?" The father, of course, answers that he wishes to redeem his child. "This is my firstborn," says he; "here, take unto thee the five shekels due for his redemption." As he hands the money to the Rabbi, he praises God for the day—"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and commanded us to perform the redemption of a son. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast maintained us, and preserved us, to enjoy this season." The Rabbi then takes the money, and after passing the coin round the child's head, as a symbol of redemption, lays his other hand on its brow, with the words—"This [child] is instead of this [money], and this [money] instead of this [child]: may this child be brought to life, to the Law, and to the fear of heaven; and as he has been brought to be ransomed, so may he enter into the Law, and good deeds." He then places both his hands on the child's head, and prays—"God make thee as Ephraim and Manasseh. The Lord bless and preserve thee. The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace Length of days, years, and peace, be gathered to thee; and God keep thee from all evil and save thy soul." And now the rite is over.

In a nation which has boasted, for two thousand years, that it hands down its religious customs, from generation to generation, without a shadow of change, in word or form, a practice of to-day is, doubtless, in most respects, identical with its counterpart in the time of Mary. It was, we may assume, with some such prayers and solemn forms that Joseph and Mary, still standing before the Nicanor Gate, "presented" the infant Saviour "to the Lord," after Mary had been declared "clean" by the sprinkling of the blood of the doves.

It was still morning, and crowds of men were entering the Court of the Israelites, by the Nicanor Gate, or passing out. The mothers and fathers who had firstborn sons to redeem were still before the gate, Mary and Joseph among them. And now an aged man, who could not come earlier to his morning devotions, approaches. We know only that his name was Simeon, a very common one, then, among the Jews, and that he was one in whom the the reign of form and rite had not extinguished true spiritual conceptions. He was "a just man and devout," says St. Luke—an expression, the force of which, in those days, is seen in the explanation of nearly the same

character given to the great high priest Simon. "He was called 'Just' both for his piety towards God, and his charity towards his countrymen." Simeon must have been one who, though he followed the Law, did so from the love of it, and from the fear of God, and was careful of its spirit, while, no doubt, exact in the countless ritual observances then thought to constitute "righteousness;" one, like Nathanael, "an Israelite indeed, in whom was no guile." Habitually drawing near God, the promise had been fulfilled to this aged saint that God would draw near to him: for "the Holy Ghost was upon him." Too old to care for longer life, so far as earth alone was concerned, his heart yet beat warmly for his down-trodden nation, and for man at large, sunk in heathen darkness. He would fain wait among the living till the appearance of the "Consolation of Israel"—the familiar name by which his race, in their deep yearning for deliverance, had come to speak of the long-expected Messiah, as the sure restorer of its glory. He had a premonition, divinely sent, that he should have this joy, and had come this morning "by the spirit" into the Temple. How he knew it we cannot tell, but, as Mary stood presenting her child, he recognized in Him the "Messiah of God." The ceremony over, his full heart cannot restrain itself. Tottering towards the young mother, he takes her babe in his arms, and gives thanks to God in words of touching beauty—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: a light to lighten the heathen and the glory of Thy people Israel." Like a true Jew, he thinks of Israel as the centre of the Messianic glory, the light of which is to stream, afar, over the heathen world around, attracting them to it.

Turning to Joseph and Mary, the old man then says a few parting words, with prophetic insight of the future both of the child and its mother. "Your child," says he to her, "is destined for the fall of many in Israel, for many will reject Him; but also for the rising again of many, who will believe on Him and live. He is sent for a sign which shall be spoken against, and will meet with reproach and contradiction, which will reveal the thoughts of many hearts respecting Him"—a truth too sadly culminating at Calvary. Mary's own heart "would be pierced with a great sorrow."

At that instant, we are told, an aged woman, Anna by name, of the tribe of Asher, and therefore a Galilean, approached the gate. She was eighty-four years of age, and had thus lived through the long sad period of war, conquest, and oppression, which had intensified, in every Jewish heart, the yearning for national deliverance by the promised Messiah. She must have remembered the fatal war between the Asmonean brothers, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus, which had brought all the misery of her people in its train, and she had likely seen the legions of Pompey, when they encamped on the hills round Jerusalem. The rise of Herod was a recollection of her middle life, and its dread-

ful story of war, murder, and crime, must have sunk into her heart, as it had into the hearts of all her race.

Her long life had been spent in pious acts and services, for, after she had been seven years a wife, her husband had died, leaving her, doubtless, still very young, since Hebrew girls married at twelve or fourteen years of age. She had never married again, a fact mentioned by St. Luke, in accordance with the feeling of the day, to her honour, but had been, in the words of St. Paul, "a widow indeed," "trusting in God," and "continuing in supplications and prayers night and day." She might, in truth, be said to have lived in the Temple, and to have spent her life in fastings and prayers; having very likely come from Galilee to be near the holy place, and thus able to give herself up to religious exercises, on the spot, where, in the eyes of a Jew, they were most sacred.

Such a woman must have been well known in a place like Jerusalem. Catching the burden of Simeon's words as she passed, she too, like him, forthwith thanks God that the promise of the Messiah is now, at last, fulfilled. There could have been few, however, to whom the glad tidings of such a Saviour were welcome, for though the heart of the nation was burning with Messianic hopes of a political kind, we are told that Anna was able to tell them to all in Jerusalem who looked for a redemption of a higher type.

Returning to Bethlehem, Joseph and Mary seem to have intended to settle in it permanently, for even after their return from Egypt they would have gone to it again, but for their fear of Archelaus. St. Matthew speaks of their living in a "house" when the Magi came, very soon after the Presentation, but the natural chamber in the hillside, which was Mary's first shelter, would be as much a part of a house as any other It has for ages been the custom to speak of the birthplace of Jesus as a cave, but the word raises very different ideas in our minds, from any that could have been felt, where such cool, dry recesses are, even still, ordinary parts of village or country houses of the humbler kind.

The "Cave of the Nativity" now shown in Bethlehem, is surrounded by such artificial distractions, that it is hard to realize the possibility of its being the actual scene of the most stupendous event in all history. A convent, like a mediæval castle for strength and solidity, and of great extent, crowns the hill, its huge buttresses resting on the shelving rocks far below. The village lies on the eastern and western summit-crests of the hill, at a height above the sea only 300 feet lower than the top of Helvellyn, and as high as the loftiest hill-top in the Cheviot range. You may walk round it in a quarter of an hour, or along its whole length in half that time, or from side to side of it in a quarter. The villagers support themselves partly by field work, but mainly by carving rosaries, crucifixes, and models of the Holy Sepulchre, in wood, for sale. The Cave of the Nativity lies on the east hill, under a "Church of St. Mary," first built by the Emperor Con-

stantine, but often renewed since. To this church there is joined, on the north, the Latin cloister of the Franciscans, with the Church of St. Catherine, which belongs to it, and, on the south, the Greek and the Armenian cloisters.

The "Church of the Nativity"—venerable at least for its great age—is built in the form of a cross. The choir, two steps higher than the long nave, includes the top and arms of the cross, and is divided from the nave by a partition. A low door, in the west, leads, through the porch, to the desolate and cheerless nave, with forty-four pillars, in seven rows, supporting the roof, the rough beams of which are uncovered, and look very bare and dreary. The Greeks and Armenians have charge of this part, the Latins being only allowed to pass through it to their cloister. The former have altars in the choir; that of the Greeks, which is consecrated to "the three kings," standing in the centre, and showing, in a niche under it, a star of white marble, marking the spot where the star of the wise men stood in the heavens over Bethlehem! The Cave of the Nativity is under the altar, and is reached, from both sides of the choir, by a flight of broad and beautiful marble steps, respectively fifteen and thirteen in number. The cave itself is about thirty-eight feet long, eleven broad, and nine high, and is paved with black and red-veined marble. The sides are partly lined with marble slabs, but some of these, on the north, have fallen off, and show the bare wall, while, elsewhere, curtains of silk or linen are hung up—the silk apparently only at festivals. From the roof hangs a row of silver lamps along the whole length of the cave. The site of the manger itself is on the east side of the grotto, in a rounded niche about eight feet high and four broad, in which an altar stands. The pavement of this recess is a few inches higher than that of the cave, and is formed of marble slabs on which there is a silver star, with sparkling rays, inlaid with precious stones. Along the edge runs an inscription which no one can read without emotion—"Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est."

South from this spot, in a corner, is a small separate cave, three steps lower than the larger one, and in this stands the "Altar of the Manger;" but as the wooden manger which was exhibited in earlier times was taken to Rome in 1486, by Pope Sixtus V., very little interest attaches now, even on the ground of antiquity, to the crib of coloured marble shown in its place. A painting of the Adoration of the Shepherds covers the rock behind. Five silver lamps swing before this, and opposite is the "Altar of the Magi," with another painting. It throws additional distrust over all, except, perhaps, the central facts of the spot, that a door from the larger cave admits into a long, crooked, rough opening, like the gallery of a mine, in which are various altars, in recesses, natural, or formed by man. You are shown the "Chapel of St. Joseph;" then that of "The Innocents," under the altar of which a square latticed opening is said to lead to the cave in which the bones of the murdered Innocents were buried.

From the Chapel of the Innocents you pass the altar of Eusebius of Cremona, who lies there; and in a cave at the west end of the gallery you are shown the tombs of the Holy Paula and her daughter Eustochium, with that of their friend St. Jerome, whose cell—the scene of his wonderful version of the Scriptures—is pointed out, a little beyond.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAGI.

The two centuries in which Judea was a province of the Persian Empire were, perhaps, the happiest time in the history of the Jewish nation. Enjoying perfect religious liberty, for which alone they cared, they were loyal and contented. Nehemiah, the rebuilder of Jerusalem, was at the same time a Persian pacha, and the people at large only expressed their common fidelity to the power he represented, in allowing, with a liberality amazing in their case, a sculpture of Susa, the Persian metropolis, to be cut over one of the gates of the Temple.

The most striking characteristic of each nation furthered this mutual respect. In Persia the highest form of Aryan religion had been brought face to face with the highest form of Shemitic, and there were many points in which mutual sympathy and regard were inevitable. Both nations hated idolatry; indeed, the Persian was more zealous in this than the Jew had been, for there were not wanting, even in the exile, Jews who served idols. In Ormuzd and Ahriman, the personifications of Light and Darkness, or Good and Evil, the Persian, as it might seem, had only developed the Jewish doctrine of Jehovah and the Evil that struggled to counteract His beneficent rule. To the Persian, as to the Jew, his sacred books were the weapon against darkness, and the guide to blessedness. They prescribed commandments and supplied revelations. They taught a life after death, and future rewards and punishments; they disclosed the issue of the great struggle between Good and Evil, and what would happen at the end of the world. Times of great trial were to prove the faithful before the final day. Their blood would flow like water. At the end of every millennium, however, Ormuzd would send a prophet, with a new revelation, and thus a reformation would be effected for the time. The prophet next to appear would be born of a virgin, and, after destroying the works of Ahriman, would establish a happy kingdom for a thousand years. To aid him in this, the most famous men of all times would appear in life again. At the end of the millennium, the resurrection, it was taught, would take place, through fifty-seven years. Then would begin the burning-up of the world by fire: the mountains would sink, and the whole globe become like a sea of molten metals. Through this all

men must pass, to be purified from the sins still cleaving to them; but while the holy would do it with ease, the wicked would suffer pain such as the same torments would have given them during life. After this purification, even the formerly wicked would be freed from evil. Ahriman and hell would be conquered and pass away; there would remain only the great communion of the blessed, who live with Ormuzd.

As regards this life, the Persians were taught that no man can remain neutral, but must take the side either of good or evil. To follow the former was not only right but natural, since Ormuzd is the Creator. Yet even he who chooses the right side does not always receive his reward, for evil is powerful, and hinders Ormuzd, in many ways, from favouring his servant here. The bad, by the help of Ahriman, may obtain prosperity, and even secure the blessings designed for the good, but in the world to come this would be no longer possible. As a man has lived on earth, so, they believed, would be his reward or suffering in the life beyond. He who has been good and pure, in thought, word, and deed, would be owned as a servant of Ormuzd, and received into the fellowship of the spirits in light, while he who had opposed Ormuzd here, would be driven down, in the life hereafter, to dwell with Ahriman and his followers, in thick darkness. The decision as to the side to which any one belongs would be given according to his works. On the third day after death, judgment, they were taught, will be held, and every soul will have to pass over a bridge, where the ways to heaven and hell divide. Beside it sit the judges of the dead and weigh the deeds of each soul in great scales. If the good bear down the evil, the soul goes forward, over the bridge, to Paradise, where it is welcomed, and has its dwelling till the Last Judgment. But when a wicked soul presents itself, on the third day after death, to try to pass over the bridge, it seems too narrow and slight, the footsteps totter, and the soul falls into the dark abyss beneath. It is there received with laughter and mockery by fiends, and tortured with the bitterest agonies till the Day of Judgment.

How far this early creed retained its hold among the Persians in the days of the Captivity, is not known, and there are no grounds for assuming that the Jews were indebted to it, to any great extent, for the development of their theology. The unity of Jehovah was in direct opposition to the dualism of the Persian system. The Jewish conception of Satan, like that of the resurrection, has its roots in the Old Testament, in which the development of both may be traced. The doctrine of the resurrection, indeed, seems hardly to have been among the old Persian popular beliefs, though found in one place in the Avesta. Jewish ideas respecting angels, good and bad, no doubt received an impulse from those of the Persians, but, as a whole, the relation between the two theologies was mainly that of independent similarity in some details.

But while the Jew borrowed very little from Persian sources, the exile, partly under Persian rule, the two hundred years of Persian supremacy in Judea, and the lasting connection between the Jews of the East and their brethren in Palestine, must have created a deep interest, on both sides, in faiths which had so much in common.

The extent to which Parsism had spread in the East, in the days of Christ, cannot be known, but it had doubtless diffused itself, more or less, by the movements of men in these troublous times, over many regions.

On the other hand, the knowledge of Judaism was by no means confined to Palestine. The great bulk of the Jewish nation had never returned from Babylon, but remained, in distinct communities, spread over the surface of that empire. Their fidelity to their faith was proved by their having supported the colony at Jerusalem till it no longer needed their help. They looked to the Temple as their religious centre, contributed largely to its funds, and received their ecclesiastical instructions from its authorities. The Babylonian Jew prided himself on the purity of his descent. What the Hebrews of Judea boasted they were, compared to those of other countries, the Babylonian Hebrew claimed to be to the Judean—"like pure flour compared to dough." From Babylon, the Jew had spread through every region of the East, and wherever he went he became a zealous missionary of his faith. Various causes had led to the same wide dispersion in the West, with the same result. The number of proselytes gained, over the world, by this propaganda, was incredible. The West was as full of Jews as the East. Egypt, and other parts of Africa, had a vast Jewish population. To use the words of Josephus, the habitable globe was so full of Jews, that there was scarcely a corner of the Roman empire where they might not be found. The great synagogue at Alexandria was so large that, if we can believe the Talmud, the Hazan, or Reader, had to make use of a handkerchief, as a signal, when the congregation were to repeat their "Amen."

Incidental proofs of the success of Jewish proselytism are numerous. Cicero, and Horace, Juvenal, Tacitus, and Seneca alike give vent to the irritation everywhere felt, at the numbers of Greeks and Romans, thus won over, to what they regarded as a hateful superstition. Exemption from military service granted to the Jews, trade privileges they specially enjoyed, marriage, and other inducements, swelled the list of proselytes in every part. "The Jewish faith," says Seneca, "is now received over every land: the conquered have given laws to the conqueror." "This race," says Dio Cassius, "has been repeatedly checked by the Romans, yet it has increased amazingly, so that it has assumed the greatest boldness." Josephus tells us that in Antioch a great multitude of Greeks were constantly coming forward as proselytes. Still further east, it was the same, for St. Luke records that proselytes thronged to the feasts at Jerusalem

from provinces of the empire, north of the Mediterranean, such as Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Cappadocia, and from Rome itself; from its southern territories, such as Egypt, Arabia, Crete, and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and from its eastern extremities, and even from lands beyond—Mesopotamians, Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,—dwellers in the vast regions reaching from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf, on the north and south, and even further to the east. The influence of Judaism extended into all lands.

Among the Jewish ideas diffused far and near by this universal agency, none would find so easy and wide a circulation as that which, above all others, filled the mind and heart of every Jew in that age—the expected appearance of a great prince, of whom they spoke as the Messiah or "Anointed." No indication of popular feeling can be more sure than that supplied by the literature of a period; and Jewish literature, from the date of Daniel to the age of Christ, was more and more completely Messianic. The Book of Enoch, the Jewish Sibylline books, the Psalter of Solomon, the Ascension of Moses, the Ascension of Isaiah, the Fourth Book of Esdras, the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and other writings of later Judaism, strove to sustain and rouse the nation, in those dark days, by prophetic anticipations of Messianic deliverance. Burning hope glows through them, like fire through clouds, revealing the feverish concentration of heart and thought of all Israel on this one grand expectation.

The restlessness of Judea was only another symptom of this universal tension of the popular mind. Patriotic hatred of foreign rule, and religious zeal against the introduction of heathen manners, kept the country in a continual ferment. This was heightened at every festival by assurances of the Rabbis, priests, and fanatical "prophets," that Jehovah would not much longer endure the intrusion of the heathen into His own Land. This temper of the people forced Herod to erect five times as many fortresses in Judea as were required in Galilee; and yet, in spite of them, the robbers and bandits of the Judean hills never ceased to make war against the existing government, in the name of Jehovah. Blind superstition reigned. The bigoted masses were continually deceived by pretended Messiahs, who led them, at one time, to the Mount of Olives, to see the walls of the now heathen Jerusalem fall down at the word of the prophet; at another, to the Jordan, to pass through, dry-shod, like their fathers; at a third, as if nothing could warn them, into the wilderness, to wait for the signs of the Son of Man predicted by Daniel. What must have been the contagious effect of such a state of things on the multitudes of Jews and proselytes from every country, who yearly visited Jerusalem? Josephus, perhaps with some exaggeration, tells us that, at many feasts, there were not less than three millions of pilgrims. How must they have spread over the whole earth the expectation of a great Jewish king who was to

conquer the world! for this the Messiah was to accomplish. It is no wonder that Josephus, Tacitus, and Suetonius should record the fact, though the Jewish historian in mean flattery, and the others from the turn of affairs, applied it to Vespasian.

It is, therefore, only what might have been expected, when St. Matthew tells us that strangers from the East came, soon after His birth, to visit the infant Jesus. Any real or fancied occasion, which might lead to the belief that the prince, so universally looked for, had actually appeared, was well-nigh certain to call forth such an incident.

The simple notice given us throws no further light on these earliest pilgrims from the great Gentile world, than is afforded by the title Magi, and the intimation that they were led to undertake their journey to Bethlehem by some mysterious appearances in the heavens.

The worship of the heavenly bodies had been established for immemorial ages in the East, where the transparent atmosphere reveals the splendours of the universe, both by night and day, with a glory unknown to duller regions. In ages when science was yet unknown, and motion was everywhere assumed as the result of inherent life, it was almost inevitable to regard the sun as the lord of day, and the moon and stars as ruling the night. From this it was only a single step to superstition. "Magic," as Professor Bastian observes, "is the physics of the children of nature." It is the first step towards induction, and misleads, only by assuming that accidental, or independent, coincidence, or succession, is necessarily cause and effect. Like children, men, in simple ages, jump to conclusions from isolated observations, nor is the power of slow and careful generalization, from a wide range of facts, attained, till very much later.

The phenomena of the daily and nightly heavens thus led very early, in the East, to a belief in astrology; the patient scientific faculty being yet wanting which would, hereafter, develop that illusive science into astronomy, as, in a later age, it raised alchemy into chemistry. The stars were supposed, then, as they have been till recent times, to exercise supreme influence over human life and the course of nature, and from this belief a vast system of imaginary results was elaborated. The special power of each star, alone or in conjunction with others, over health and sickness, prosperity or trouble, life or death, the affairs of nations, and the phenomena of nature, was supposed to have been discovered; and this power was believed to affect the future as well as the present. Diodorus Siculus, who lived in the generation before Christ, says of the astrologers of the East, "They think the noblest study is that of the five stars called planets, which they call interpreters. This name they give them, because other stars do not wander like them, but have a fixed course, while these have paths of their own, and predict things to be, thus interpreting to men the will of the gods. For they say that they portend some things by their rising, others by their setting, and still others by their colour, to those

who study them diligently. For, at one time, they say they foretell the violence of storms; at another the excess of rains or of heat, the appearance of comets, eclipses of the sun or moon, earthquakes, and, indeed, every change in the sky, either fortunate or the reverse, not only to nations and districts, but to kings and common people." The position of the stars at a child's birth was held to determine its future fate or fortune, and, hence, to cast nativities, early became one of the most important functions of astrologers.

This science was very early cultivated among the races inhabiting the Mesopotamian plains. Like all higher knowledge in simple times, it was in the hands of a priestly caste, known as Magi, a word which seems of Aryan derivation. This order flourished among the Medes, Babylonians, and Persians, but it is chiefly famous in connection with Persia, and seems as if it had risen among the Aryan races, and had only mingled as a foreign element in the Semitic civilization of Babylon.

We first meet the title as that of one of the Chaldean officials sent by Nebuchadnezzar to Jerusalem—the Rabmag, or head of the Magi; and in the Book of Daniel, we find the caste divided into five classes, as the astrologers and dream interpreters of Babylon. Their origin, however, identified them with the purer faith of Persia, much more than with a corrupt idolatry, and hence they especially flourished under the Persian rule. In later times the name lost its early prestige, from the growth of lower magical arts, practised as the order degenerated, so that, in the New Testament, it is applied, excepting in the case of those who came to visit the infant Saviour, only to two "sorcerers"—Simon Magus, and one Bar-Jesus.

Soon after the presentation of our Lord in the Temple, a strange report spread through Jerusalem. Members of the old priestly caste of Persia had "come from the East," inquiring where they could find a new-born King of the Jews, whose star, they said, they had seen in the East. It was quite in keeping with Jewish belief to find indications of great events in the appearances of the heavens, for their ancient Scriptures spoke of a star that should come out of Jacob, and they had long referred the prophecy to their expected Messiah. It was, indeed, universally believed that extraordinary events, especially the birth and death of great men, were heralded by appearances of stars, and still more of comets, or by conjunctions of the heavenly bodies. Thus Suetonius tells us that at the death of Cæsar "a hairy star shone continuously for seven days, rising about the eleventh hour," and Josephus relates that for a whole year before the fall of Jerusalem a star, in the shape of a sword—doubtless a comet—hung over the doomed city. A hundred and thirty years after Christ's birth, a false Messiah, in Hadrian's reign, assumed the title of Bar-Cochba—"the son of the star"—in allusion to the star to come out of Jacob. The Jews had already, long before Christ's day, dabbled in astrology, and the various forms of magic which became connected

with it. They were skilled in mysterious combinations of letters and numbers, which they used as talismans and amulets, to heal the sick, to drive away evil spirits, and bring frightful curses when wished, and they even affirmed that some of their spells could draw the moon from heaven or open the abyss beneath the earth. Such practices dated among them as far back as the time of Alexander the Great. They were much given to cast horoscopes from the numerical value of a name. Everywhere through the whole Roman empire, Jewish magicians, dream expounders, and sorcerers, were found. Josephus ascribes the banishment of the Jews from Rome to the acts of impostors of this kind. Nor did their superstition stop here. They were skilled in the mysteries of astrology itself. "The planets give wisdom and riches," says the Talmud, and it adds, in other passages,—"The life and portion of children hang not on righteousness, but on their star." "The planet of the day has no virtue, but the planet of the hour (of nativity) has much. Those who are born under the sun are beautiful and noble-looking, frank and open; those born under Venus, rich and amatory; under Mercury, strong in memory and wise; under the moon, feeble and inconstant; under Jupiter, just; under Mars, fortunate." "The calculation of the stars is the joy of the Rabbi," says the Pirke Aboth. In another passage, indeed, a Rabbi tells an inquirer that "there is no planet that rules Israel," but the explanation added shows a pride that only a Jew could express—"The sons of Israel are themselves stars." Many Rabbis gave themselves to astrology.

Belief in the influence of the stars over life and death, and in special portents at the birth of great men, survived, indeed, to recent times. Chaucer abounds in allusions to it. He attributes the great rain and the pestilence of 1348 and 1350 to an extraordinary conjunction of Saturn with other planets, and in the Man of Lawes Tale he says:—

> "In sterrès many a wynter therbyfore,
> Was write the deth of Ector and Achilles,
> Of Pompê, Julius, er they were i-bore;
> The stryf of Thebès, and of Ercules,
> Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
> The deth."

Still later, Shakespere tells us—

> "When beggars die there are no comets seen;
> The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes;"

and Bedford at Henry V.'s funeral is made to say—

> "Comets, importing change of time and states,
> Brandish your crystal tresses in the sky,
> And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
> That have consented unto Henry's death."

The special phenomena that led the Magi to undertake their journey have been elsewhere stated. That successive conjunctions of three planets in the sign of the Zodiac, Pisces, which was believed by the

Jews to be that in which a similar conjunction happened before the birth of Moses, and in which another was to occur before the birth of the Messiah, should have roused the attention of men to whom the motions of the planets were revelations from heaven, was only natural. Doubtless they had heard in their own country such a belief expressed by Jews, and traced to the prophecy of Balaam, one of their own caste, and from their own parts. When, in addition to such significant facts, at a time when all men were looking for a great Jewish prince, a comet appeared soon after, nothing could be more in keeping than that men, to whom such phenomena were the voice of God, should set out to pay homage to the new-born King who was to rule the world.

At the time when the Magi arrived, Herod, now an old man, was sinking into the last stages of disease, but was still as jealous and afraid of attempts against his throne as ever. Its steps were wet with the blood of his best-loved wife, his sons, his benefactor, and of the flower of the nation, murdered to make it secure. Like our own William the Conqueror, or Henry VIII., or like Alexander the Great, or Nero, or Tiberius, his character had grown darker in his later years, and now, in his old age, he sat alone in his new palace, amidst splendour of architecture greater if possible than that of the Temple, lonely, hated and hating, his subjects waiting impatiently, in veiled rebellion, for his death. In his own court, shortly before, a plot had been discovered which had filled all Jerusalem with commotion. The Pharisees, to the number of 6,000, had refused to take the oath of allegiance, and their leaders, whom the people believed gifted with the power of prophecy, had gone the length of asserting, that God had determined that Herod and his family should be speedily driven from the throne, to make way for the Messiah. To secure the fulfilment of this prediction, the influence of their firm supporter, the wife of Pheroras, his brother, was used, to carry the plot inside the palace, among the ladies of the court. Bagoas, the eunuch, as most easily approached, from his connection with the harem, was made their tool, and, with him, a youth named Carus, the loveliest person of his day, but loathsomely immoral. Bagoas was won over to believe that he would be the father of the coming Messiah, but Herod found out the whole, and the conspiracy was quenched in blood. No wonder that, as St. Matthew tells us, "he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him," when the news spread of strangers having come on such an errand as that of the Magi. To Herod their arrival was a fresh cause of jealous terror to Jerusalem a possible ground of hope.

Herod had often before shown the craft bred by habitual suspicion, and was too clever to take any rash steps now. Summoning the heads of the priesthood and the "scribes" to his palace, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

Jewish theology had already determined, correctly, that the Messiah was to be of the stock of Judah, which had from the first challenged

the headship of the tribes, and had been supreme since Ephraim's captivity in Assyria. It boasted of David, the ancestor and the prototype of the Messiah, and the words of Jacob that the "sceptre" should "not depart from it, until Shiloh come," or, as it may be translated, from the Greek version, "till he comes to whom the dominion belongs," had long been understood to refer to the Messiah. "How fair is the King Messiah," says the Targum on the passage, "who will rise from the house of Judah!" The words of Zechariah, "The Lord of Hosts hath visited the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle," are also applied by another Targum to the Messiah. "A king will rise from the children of Jesse," says the same Targum elsewhere, "and the Messiah will spring from his children's children." Hence "the Son of David" was a constant name for this expected Prince.

As a descendant of David, Bethlehem, David's town, was naturally regarded as the place of his birth, and hence the passage in Micah, adduced by the priests and scribes, is also quoted by the Targums. "An Arab said to a Jew at his plough," says the Talmud, "'Your Messiah is born!' 'What is his name?' asked the Jew. 'Menahem, the son of Hezekiah.' 'Where was he born?' asked the Jew again. 'In the king's castle at Bethlehem Judah,' answered the Arab."

Long before the birth of Christ, it had been felt that the time for the advent of the Messiah was fulfilled, and his non-appearance even led to the fanciful idea that he was already born, but kept himself hidden in some unknown part. "We know this man whence he is," said the Jews, long after, of Jesus, "but when the Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence He is!" "Thou, O anointed one of Israel," cries the Targum, "Thou who art hidden on account of the sins of the people of Zion, Thine shall be the kingdom!"

The prophecy of Balaam had led to the same belief among the Jews, as amongst the Eastern Magi—that a great star would appear in heaven when the Messiah came. "When the Messiah is to be revealed," says the book Sohar, "a star will rise in the east, shining in great brightness, and seven other stars round it will fight against it on every side." "A star will rise in the east which is the star of the Messiah, and will remain in the east fifteen days." The rising of Bar-Cochba, "the son of the star," was a terrible illustration of this belief.

To hear of Magi coming from the East—the country of Balaam, the reputed founder of the caste, announcing the appearance of the star of the Messiah, which they themselves expected, was, hence, fitted to rouse the Rabbinical world of Jerusalem to the highest excitement. They had already a wondrous estimate of the great soothsayer, for Philo, a contemporary of Christ, speaks of him as "famous for his gift of prophecy." "He was skilled," says he, "in every branch of the black art. He had learned the greatest names (names of angels and of God, to be used in magic), through his knowledge of the flight of birds, and did much that was wonderful by their means.

He predicted rain in the hottest time of summer; heat and drought in the midst of winter; unfruitfulness when the fields were greenest; plenty in years of famine, and the overflowing or drying up of streams; the removal of pestilence; and a thousand other things, the forctelling of which got him boundless fame, which spread even to this." The Rabbis believed, indeed, that Balaam himself was a Rabbi, who taught disciples the black art, and that the Magi, his successors, knew his prophecy of the star of the Messiah, through the tradition of his schools.

Having learned the expected birthplace of the Messiah, which he would himself have known, had he been a Jew and not an Idumean, Herod sent for the Magi and made every inquiry, under the pretext that he, also, wished to do homage to the young child. But very different thoughts were in his heart. A descendant of David was not likely to be spared by the man who had murdered the last of the Asmoneans. The hope of the world was not to perish thus, however, for the Magi having paid their visit to Bethlehem, and presented gifts to Him, as all Easterns do when they come before princes or the great, a dream, sent from above, led them to return to their own country without revisiting Jerusalem.

Balked in his purpose so far, Herod was not the man to stop at half-measures. A few murders more were nothing. The most thorough precautions must be taken. A band of soldiers was therefore sent to Bethlehem with orders to kill every male child near the supposed age of the infant he dreaded. Josephus is silent about this slaughter, but this needs not surprise us, for what was a single deed of blood, in a mountain village, among the crimes of Herod? Nor is it alone in the omissions of the historian, for his whole history of the centuries after the Return omits far more than it tells.

Joseph and Mary had left Bethlehem before this tragedy, and had fled to the friendly shelter of Egypt, at a warning divinely given. How long they remained there is not known. All Palestine was under Herod, so that he could have reached them in any part of it, but in Egypt the fugitives were safe. It was, moreover, almost another Judea, for the favour shown to their race by the Ptolemies had induced as many as a million of Jews to settle in the Nile valley, and of the five quarters of Alexandria, with 300,000 free citizens, Jews occupied more than two. They had had a temple of their own at Leontopolis, in the Delta, for about 160 years, though they preferred to go up to that at Jerusalem; the Greek translation of the Bible, which had already widely taken the place of the Hebrew original, had been made in Egypt, and the Egyptian Rabbis, by their efforts to turn Judaism into a philosophic system which should win it the favour of the cultivated Romans and Greeks, had founded a new school of Jewish theology, which was, hereafter, to influence even Christianity.

It has been usual to suppose that Herod died in the spring of the

year 759—that is, within a few months after the birth of Christ. But there seem to be some reasons for believing that he lived till 753.

Josephus says that he died shortly before the Passover, and that an eclipse of the moon happened not long before. In the year 750 such an eclipse happened on the 13th of March; but if he died at the end of that month, or in April, there must have been a crowding of events into the short interval, beyond what seems possible.

It appears, however, that there was an eclipse of the moon on the night of January the 10th, in the year 753, and it is urged that this suits the facts much better, by giving three months instead of one for the incidents mentioned by Josephus, even if Christ were born three years later, and by leaving ample time for those related by Matthew and Luke. A passage has been found in a Calendar of the Feasts, in the Talmud which seems to support this later date. "The 1st Shebet (or 24th of January) is a day of double good fortune as the day of the death of Herod and of Jannai, for it is joy before God when the wicked are taken from this world." If this be right, the eclipse happened on the 10th of January, Herod's death on the 24th, and there was ample time before April for the burial and all that followed, which must have required weeks.

If, then, Herod had yet nearly three years to live after the birth of Christ, Joseph and Mary must have stayed in Egypt that length of time. Nor would it be difficult for Joseph to find support, as the different classes of Jewish workmen in Egypt were associated in guilds, which maintained those out of employment, much as trades' unions do, now. The goldsmiths, the silversmiths, the nail-makers and needle-makers, the coppersmiths, and the weavers, are specially mentioned as being banded together in such associations, which supported any stranger of their respective crafts till he found work. The workers in wood, in all probability, had such a union as well; and Joseph, moreover, though called a carpenter in the Gospels, may have been more, for the word does not necessarily mean a worker in wood only, but a waggon smith and other occupations as well. In its Hebrew sense, it may mean, indeed, any kind of trade which uses cutting instruments, and is used indifferently of workers in metal, wood, or stone.

Egypt, though thus filled with a Jewish population, was, however, no land for Joseph and Mary, nor, above all, for the infant Jesus. Neither the Greek inhabitants of the towns and cities, nor the Egyptian peasantry, were very friendly to the strangers who, in hundreds of thousands, intruded into the Nile valley. The old hatred between the land of Mizraim and the sons of Israel seemed still, in some measure, to survive on both sides. The Jews hated the Egyptian priesthood, with its worthless secrets and its ridiculous symbols, and prided themselves, as the prophets had done of old, on their purer faith. They saw, in Egypt, the incarnation of the most corrupt heathenism. The command, "Thou shalt make no likeness

or graven image," was nowhere mocked to such an extent as on the banks of the Nile. Even Philo makes the remark that the Egyptian religion is the most grovelling of all forms of idolatry, since it did not look to the heavens for objects of worship, but to the earth, and the slime of the Nile, with its creatures. Josephus derides the system which worshipped crocodiles and apes, vipers and cats; and even the Roman Juvenal scoffed at a race who grew their divinities in their kitchen garden. The Apostle Paul evidently had Egyptian heathenism in his mind when he speaks of idolatry as running to the foul license of changing the image of the invisible God into the likeness of men, of birds, of four-footed beasts, and creeping things. On the other hand, the Jews suffered from the traditional hatred of their race by the Egyptians, in the repetition of scandals and shameful calumnies against them, which had survived since the Exodus. It was said that the children of Israel, whom Moses led out of Egypt, were lepers, whom Pharaoh had banished from the country; and Greeks and natives, catching at the bitter slander, strove which should turn it, and others equally contemptuous, with most effect, against their Jewish fellow-citizens, whom all equally disliked. The very fact that the Romans had granted special favours to the Jews, and that they were rivals in trade, was, indeed, itself sufficient to account for such an attitude of acrid raillery and depreciation. Things had at last come to open rupture, and the Jewish community of Alexandria looked forward only to ultimate expulsion and ruin. It is no wonder, therefore, that Joseph and Mary sought to return as soon as possible to their own country.

The Apocryphal Gospels are full of extraordinary miracles wrought by the infant Jesus while in Egypt, and of legends respecting him and Mary, but none of them are worth reproducing. Memphis is commonly given as the place where Joseph settled, and his stay is variously stated as having lasted three years, two, or only one.

The star and the Magi have naturally given rise to many legends. The country, the number, and the names of the illustrious visitors are as entirely passed over by the Apocrypha as by the Gospels, but later tradition abundantly atones for the omission. They were said to be the kings of Sheba and Seba, in Arabia, come to offer gifts to His light and to the brightness of His rising, but Persia, Chaldea, Ethiopia, and India, have each had their advocates. It is equally undetermined in the legends, whether they were Jews or heathen, though most of the fathers favour the idea that they were the latter, and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy represents them as worshipping fire, and as referring to a prophecy of Zoroaster respecting the Messiah. Their three gifts led to the fancy that they themselves were only three in number, which was supposed to correspond to the three divisions of the earth as then known, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Sometimes, however, they are spoken of as twelve, to correspond with the Apostles, and their names given, with the

special gift which each presented. Their kingdoms also are mentioned, and their very ages, which are made to represent youth, manhood, and grey hairs. Bede, indeed, is able to tell us that Melchior was an old man, with long white hair, and a sweeping beard, and that he gave the gold as to a king; that Caspar was a beardless youth, with a ruddy face, and that he presented the frankincense, as a gift worthy the God; while Balthasar was a swarthy strong-bearded man, and gave the myrrh for the burial. In the cathedral at Cologne, visitors may yet see the supposed skulls of the three, set in jewels, and exhibited in a great gilded shrine. They are said to have been discovered by Bishop Reinald of Cologne in the twelfth century.

Imagination has been equally busy with the star. The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy says it was an angel in the form of a star, and several of the Fathers were of the same opinion. Origen believed it to have been a comet. One tradition is beautiful. In the farthest East, it says, lived a people who had a book which bore the name of Seth, and in this was written the appearance of the star of the Messiah, and the offering of gifts to Him. This book was handed down from father to son, generation after generation. Twelve men were chosen who should watch for the star, and when one died, another was chosen in his place. These men, in the speech of the land, were called Magi. They went, each year, after the wheat-harvest, to the top of a mountain, which was called the Mountain of Victory. It had a cave in it, and was pleasant by its springs and trees. At last the star appeared, and in it the form of a little child, and over him the sign of the cross; and the star itself spoke to them, and told them to go to Judea. For two years, which was the time of their journey, the star moved before them, and they wanted neither food nor drink. Gregory of Tours adds that the star sank, at last, into a spring at Bethlehem, where he himself had seen it, and where it still may be seen, but only by pure maidens.

The Gospel of Matthew, which was written for the Jewish Christians of Palestine, has for its primary aim the proof that Jesus was the promised Messiah, and as nothing would weigh so much in the minds of men trained in Jewish ideas, as evidences from their own Scriptures, it abounds with quotations from them to show how prophecy was fulfilled in our Saviour. There are five such quotations in the first two chapters, some of which would not perhaps have struck us, of themselves, as primarily bearing on the Messiah. In Christ's day, a system of allegorizing was in vogue with the Rabbis of the various Jewish schools, as it afterwards came to be in the Christian Church, and this, though familiar to those for whom the Gospel was first written, is not so much so to us. How far, in some cases, it is intended to be understood that the passages quoted, originally referred to the events to which they are applied, has been a subject of much controversy, for the sacred writers themselves evidently intend them to be understood, in some instances, as a divine fulfilment of

prophecy, but, in others, only as an illustration and parallel. Perhaps the rule laid down by Tholuck is as nearly right as any. "Where parallels are adduced in the New Testament," says he, "from the Old, whether it be in words of the prophets, or in institutions or events, it is to be taken for granted, in general, that the intention was we should regard them as divinely designed. On the contrary, there are other cases, as for example, Matthew ii. 17, where the phrase 'that it might be fulfilled' is not used, but only 'then.' In these the sacred writer is to be regarded as following the custom of his day, by expressing his own thoughts in the words of Scripture."

CHAPTER XII.

NAZARETH, AND THE EARLY DAYS OF JESUS.

THE exceeding difficulty of telling the story of a life like that of Jesus Christ, a man and yet divine, one having all power given Him in heaven and in earth, and yet like other men in all respects except sin, is at once evident, on the least reflection. Indeed, it is not so much difficult as impossible, to tell it as such conditions demand, for human intellect can only comprehend the created, not the Creator. The Eternal still dwells in thick darkness; no eye hath seen or can see Him: His very attributes utterly transcend our comprehension. In Jesus Christ, as at once God and Man, we have opposite conceptions which we may humbly receive, but can neither harmonize, explain, nor adequately express. Man, as such, is not almighty, but frail as a flower; not omniscient, but, even at his highest wisdom, a child on the shore of the Infinite; not omnipresent, but fixed at any given moment to one minute spot. We cannot conceive what is implied in a nature of which almighty power, omniscience, and omnipresence are attributes; far less present them, adequately, in words, as united with human weakness and local limitation. The Man Christ Jesus may be realized. His acts and words may be related; His divine powers may be illustrated by their recorded exhibitions, and there may be the most sincere admission of His highest claims; but the narrative must still inevitably, as a whole, be that of the human side of His nature only.

It seems necessary to remind the reader of this at the point which we have reached, to prevent misconceptions. We yield to none in reverence to Jesus Christ as "God manifest in the flesh;" but the mystery of a nature which could be thus described must ever remain beyond the power of adequate presentation in any narrative of His earthly life.

Having heard of Herod's death, Joseph determined to return to Palestine, with the intention of settling permanently at Bethlehem. On reaching Judea, however, and finding Archelaus had been ap-

pointed ethnarch, the dread of one who, of all the family, was believed to be the most like the hated tyrant, his father Herod,—the tumults and massacres in Jerusalem at his accession, and the chronic disturbance of the country, induced him to choose his former place of residence, in Galilee, instead.

In Nazareth, he was still under the rule of another of Herod's sons, Herod Antipas—a man of no higher principle than his brother, as his shameless life abundantly proved, but less likely to be goaded into violent acts towards his people, from receiving less irritation at their hands, than Archelaus had to bear, at those of the fiercely orthodox population of Judea. With the exception of the dead Antipater, moreover, Archelaus was the most tyrannical and self-willed of the sons of Herod, and he was not at all unlikely to follow up the suspicious cruelty of his father, which had led to the Bethlehem massacre, should any hint betray the return of the supposed rival to his dominions. Herod Antipas, on the other hand, was far less likely to trouble himself about any claimant of the throne of Judea, a province unconnected with his government. Thus, Nazareth became, once more, a year or two before the commencement of our present era, the habitation of the infant Jesus. Here He was to spend all His future life, except part of its last few years.

Nazareth lies among the hills, which extend for about six miles between the plains of El Battauf on the north, and Esdraelon on the south. It is on the north side of the latter, and overlooks one of the numerous little folds or bays of the great plain, which are seen wherever the hills open. The village lies on the northern side of this green bay, and is reached by a narrow, steep, and rough, mountain path, over which the villagers have to bring their harvests laboriously from the plain beneath, on camels, mules, and donkeys. If the traveller ride up this path in March, when Palestine is at its best, he will be charmed by the bright green of the plains and the beauty of the flowers, everywhere lighting up the otherwise barren hills, which, at best, yield scanty pasture for sheep and goats. The red anemone and the pink phlox are the commonest; rock roses, white and yellow, are plentiful, with a few pink ones, the cytisus here and there covers the ground with golden flowers, and the pink convolvulus, marigold, wild geranium, and red tulip, are varied by several kinds of orchis—the asphodel, the wild garlic, mignonette, salvia, pimpernel, and white or pink cyclamen. As the path ascends, the little fertile valley beneath, running east and west, gradually opens to about a quarter of a mile in breadth, covered with fields and gardens, divided by cactus hedges, and running into the hills for about a mile. Near the village, beside the pathway, about an hour from Esdraelon, is a spring, from which the water pours from several taps in a slab of masonry, falling into a trough below, for camels, horses, asses, and cattle.

The distant view of the village itself, in spring, is beautiful. Its

streets rise, in terraces, on the hill-slopes, towards the north-west. The hills, here and there broken into perpendicular faces, rise above it, in an amphitheatre round, to a height of about five hundred feet, and shut it in from the bleak winds of winter. The flat-roofed houses, built of the yellowish-white limestone of the neighbourhood, shine in the sun with a dazzling brightness, from among gardens, and fig-trees, olives, cypresses, and the white and scarlet blossoms of the orange and pomegranate. A mosque, with its graceful minaret, a large convent, from whose gardens rise tall cypresses, and a modest church, are the principal buildings. The streets are narrow, poor, and dirty, and the shops are mere recesses on each side of them, but the narrowness shuts out the heat of the sun, and the miniature shops are large enough for the local trade. Numbers of dogs which belong to the place, and have no owner, lie about, as in all Eastern towns. Small gardens, rich in green clumps of olive-trees and stately palms, break the monotonous yellow of the rocks and houses, while doves coo, and birds of many kinds twitter, in the branches, or flit across the open. The bright colours of the roller, the hoopoe, the sunbird, or the bulbul, catch the eye as one or other darts swiftly past, and many birds familiar in England are seen or heard, if the traveller's stay be lengthened, for of the 322 birds found in Palestine, 172 are also British. The song of the lark floods a thousand acres of sky with melody; the restless titmouse, the willow-wren, the blackcap, the hedge-sparrow, the whitethroat, or the nightingale, flit or warble, on the hill-side, or in the cactus hedges, while the rich notes of the song-thrush or blackbird rise from the green clumps in the valley beneath. The wagtail runs over the pebbles of the brook as here at home; the common sparrow haunts the streets and house-tops; swallows and swifts skim the hill-sides and the grassy meadows; and, in winter, the robin redbreast abounds. Great butterflies flit over the hill-sides, amongst the flowers, while flocks of sheep and goats dot the slopes and the little plain below. Through this a brook ripples, the only one in the valley, and thither the women and maidens go to fetch water in tall jars, for household use. It is the one spring of the town, and, hence, must have been that which the mothers and daughters of Christ's day frequented. It rises under the choir of the present Greek church, and is led down the hill-side in a covered channel. An open space near the church is the threshing-floor of the village, where, after harvest, the yoked oxen draw the threshing-sledges slowly, round and round, over the grain, in the open air. No wonder that in spring Nazareth should have been thought a paradise, or that it should be spoken of as perhaps the only spot in Palestine where the mind feels relief from the unequalled desolation that reigns nearly everywhere else.

Later in the year, the hills around lose the charm of their spring flowers. They are then grey and barren, divided by dry gullies, with no colour to relieve their tame and commonplace outlines, the

same on every side. But even then, the rich hues at sunset, with its tints reflected from the rocks, the long-drawn shadows of afternoon, and the contrasts of light and dark on a cloudy day, give frequent charms to a landscape in itself unattractive.

Nazareth lies nearly twelve hundred feet above the sea, and some of the hills which cluster round, and shut it in, rise, as has been said, about five hundred feet higher. It is a mountain village, only to be reached from the plain by a tedious climb.

The Nazareth hills are of different kinds of white limestone. A thick bed of this rock—containing flints, and merging, above, into the marl which is still found at Nablus, and into a more thinly bedded soft limestone beneath—originally covered the whole country, from Samaria to Nazareth. This stone, though hard when exposed to the air, is so soft, where fresh, that it can be cut like chalk. Beneath it lies hard dolomitic limestone. The hills are the remains of these different rocks, after denudation through a long geological period, their strata being more or less disturbed by volcanic upheaval and contortion. Three centres of eruptive outbursts are visible in the neighbourhood of Esdraelon—one in the range of Gilboa, on the south-east; another at Little Hermon, between Gilboa and Tabor; and the third in the south-eastern part of the Carmel range, at Jebel Iskander—no fewer than twenty-nine outbursts of basalt, on the east, west, and north of the plain, marking their former activity. The limestone beds are everywhere more or less tilted up by this volcanic energy. The rich dark soil of Esdraelon has been formed from the wearing down of the basalt which now forms part of some of the neighbouring hills, and from strata of volcanic mud derived from it. The smaller plains of Palestine are of a more clayey soil, the hills round them being of limestone or basalt, presenting, at times, sudden and precipitous cliffs, and the original soft, chalky limestone remaining still on their tops.

The free air of their mountain home seems to have had its effect on the people of Nazareth. Its bright-eyed, happy children and comely women strike the traveller, and even their dress differs from that of other parts. Through Palestine generally, the frequent and excessive changes of climate expose the peasants, or fellahin, to rheumatism, coughs, and bronchitis; and, as a protection, the men in many parts wear a sheepskin coat, on warm days as well as cold. The women, however, make no change in their dress, which usually consists of nothing but a long blue garment tied in round the waist, a bonnet of red cloth, decorated with an edging or roll of silver coins, bordering the forehead and extending to the ears, reminding one of the crescent-shaped female head-dress worn by some of the Egyptian priestesses. Over this, a veil or shawl of coarse white cotton is thrown, which hangs down to the waist, serving to cover the mouth, while the bosom is left exposed, for Eastern and Western ideas of decorum differ in some things.

The people of the plain of Esdraelon are different. Their dark skins, bright eyes, white teeth, and wonderful taste in the combination of the brightest colours, draw the attention. Nothing more picturesque could be desired than the women, in their red veils and long pointed sleeves, carrying water; the dark camel-drivers, in black head-dresses, and striped brown and white abbas, riding on diminutive donkeys, before the train of clumsy, swinging, dull-coloured camels; the rich sheikh, in a purple jacket, scarlet boots, thin white cloak, and yellow head-dress; his grey mare, with a scarlet saddle, with long brown tassels at its peaks; alternating with the herds of black goats and diminutive red oxen.

The various costumes which seem peculiar to Nazareth are not less striking. The short abba or cloak of the men, and their gorgeous kefeyehs, or kerchiefs, folded triangularly, and thrown over the head, so as to fall over the neck and shoulders; the white veil, the silk dresses, the broad scarves, and many-coloured trousers, red, green, blue, and yellow, of the women, give a crowd a peculiarly picturesque appearance, and differ materially from the sordid dresses of the poorer southern villages. In a country where nothing changes, through age after age, the dress of to-day is very likely, in most respects, the same as it was two thousand years ago, though the prevailing colour of the Hebrew dress, at least in the better classes, was the natural white of the materials employed, which the fuller made even whiter.

One characteristic of the hills round Nazareth existing already in Christ's day, and, indeed, much earlier, is a striking proof of the denseness of the population of Palestine in former times, and of its restless industry and energy. Many of them are honeycombed with countless excavations of various kinds. Cemeteries of over two hundred tombs, cut in the soft rock, some of them large tunnelled vaults, with separate hollows for twelve bodies; large numbers of cisterns, grape and olive presses, store or dwelling caves, wells and quarries, are everywhere abundant, as, indeed, they are over the whole country, but especially in the Shephelah or Philistine plain. The cisterns are from twenty to thirty feet deep, shaped like a church bell or inverted funnel, about two and a half feet across at the mouth, and fifteen to twenty-five at the bottom, the whole cut out of the solid limestone, showing that Palestine must always have been, for a good part of the year, a waterless country, needing to store up the rains of autumn and spring. It is not uncommon to find groups of from three to ten, or even more, of these fine excavations together. What must have been the density of the population, what its civilization and industry, to leave such remains in such numbers?

The Nazareth hills are, for the most part, neglected now, but were utilized in Christ's day as the hill-sides along the Rhine or the lime-slopes of Malta are at present, by terrace cultivation. Traces of these ancient terraces may still be seen. All the loose stones were gathered and built into rough walls along the sides of the hills, like so many

steps, as at Bethlehem still. The tops of the strips thus gained, after being levelled, produced grapes and all kinds of fruit in great abundance. The supporting walls, having been long neglected, have fallen down, and well-nigh disappeared; the earth once behind them has been washed away by the heavy rains, and the slopes, except in spring, when the flowers are in their glory, show little but barren rock.

The view from Nazareth itself is limited, as might be expected from its nestling in an amphitheatre of hills that shut in the little valley, except to the west, where it opens on Esdraelon. From the top of the hill at the back of the village, to the north, however, it is very different. Galilee lies spread out like a map at one's feet. The eye wanders over the plain of Esdraelon in its broad western sweep. Three hours to the east, it rests on the round outline of Tabor, with its woods of oaks and pistachios, and, beyond it, on the swelling mass of Jebel el Dahy, or little Hermon, which closes in the plain, at about the same height as Tabor. Ranging southwards, the mountains of Gilboa, four or five hundred feet lower, shut in the lowlands; while far beyond them, across the hidden course of the Jordan, rise the mountains of Gilead. Looking to the south, across Esdraelon, the hills of Samaria are seen, through the openings of the wooded heights of the Carmel range, reaching northward to join it. Turning slowly towards the west, the whole length of the Carmel hills, running thirty miles north-west to the coast, seem, in the pure air of these parts, as if close at hand. About twenty miles off, almost directly west, rises the headland of Carmel; its top crowned with woods of oaks and fig-trees, its slopes varied with orchards, laurels, and olives, and its seaward face sinking abruptly into the Mediterranean waters. Nestling at the northern base of the hill, on the sea-shore, the white houses of Haifa arrest the eye. The blue waters, specked with sails, stretch far away, beyond, to the distant horizon. The whole Bay of Acre is seen, though Acre itself lies too low to be visible. The brown sandy shores, sweeping far to the north, are hidden only here and there, by intervening hills. Leaving the coast, and looking from north-west to north, the panorama shows a sea of hills—the highlands of Galilee,—broken by the fertile upland plain of Battauf, close at hand, with the ruins of the once famous Sepphoris, on a solitary hill at its southern edge, and beyond, on its northern slope, the cottages of Cana of Galilee. In the background, twenty miles away, tower the hills of Safed, 2,770 feet above the sea, rising above the ever-heightening summits of the highlands of Upper Galilee. But Safed itself is only midway in the landscape. Mountains rise beyond mountains, to the north, till they culminate more than sixty miles off, as the crow flies, in the highest peaks of Hermon, ten thousand feet above the sea-level. As the eye wanders round to the point from which it began its survey, hills beyond hills still meet the view, stretching away, with rounded tops, towards the Sea of Galilee, and rising again, beyond it, to a greater height on its eastern shores.

In the town of Nazareth, then doubtless much larger, Jesus spent most of His life. Amidst these hills, in these streets, He was brought up as a child; and "grew," as a boy, "in wisdom and stature." Here, for many years, He laboured as a man for His daily bread. This was the landscape on which He daily gazed, and it was along these mountain paths He walked. He must often have stood on the hill-top from which the whole country is seen, and the little bay of the great plain below the village, with its encircling heights, must have been familiar to Him in its least detail. If there be a spot to which a Christian pilgrim might rightly turn, as the most sacred in the history of his faith, it is Nazareth.

The influence of such a home on the character of its people must have been marked. Less lovely, perhaps, than the plain of Gennesareth, on the other side of the hills on the north-east, it was, yet, a place fitted, alike by the dreamy quiet of its environment of heights, the surpassing view from the hill above it, the beauty of earth and sky, and the soul-inspiring purity of its mountain air, to form true-hearted and generous children of nature, quick in intellect, bright in imagination, and noble in higher characteristics. Yet, with all its seclusion, the position of Nazareth checked any narrow onesidedness. The wonderful landscape from its hill-top made this impossible. The great, rich, Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, at once a town and a fortress, was scarcely three hours distant, Tiberias was only eight, and a crown of populous villages rose on all sides, around. The great high road—known even in the days of Isaiah as "the way of the sea"—ran across the plain of El Battauf, just behind Nazareth, from Damascus to Ptolemais. Another caravan road, from Damascus to Judea and Egypt, crossed Esdraelon at the foot of the Nazareth hill, meeting a third, from the north, at Megiddo, on the other side of the plain. The Roman road from Syria, moreover, after passing through Berytus, Sidon, Tyre, and Ptolemais, on the coast, ran, by way of Sepphoris, through Nazareth, to Samaria, Jerusalem, and the south. Nazareth was, thus, at the crossing-place of the nations, where commerce or military changes gave daily familiarity with all the neighbouring races—the Syrian, the Phenician, the Arab, and the Roman; and where there was so much intercourse, there must have been greater liberality than in other parts of Jewish territory.

It has been usual to think of Nazareth as a rough and fierce place, with a doubtful character even for morals. The rejection of its greatest Son by his fellow-townsmen has been thought to show their rude coarseness; but Jesus offers a milder explanation—that a prophet has no honour in his own country. Yet, even in rejecting him, only a rough and coarse people would have acted so rudely. The exclamation of Nathanael seems to imply the doubtful morality of the town, perhaps from its position in the midst of constant heathen traffic on the great roads; and this appears to correspond with the other notices of it in the Gospels. If it were so, it would only

heighten the wonder that such a shoot should grow from ground so dry!

Of the first thirty years of Christ's life we know nothing, except the one incident of His visit to Jerusalem, with Joseph and Mary, when a boy of twelve years old. It is not difficult, however, to imagine at least some of the influences which must have had their part in the development of that "wisdom" in which He "grew," as His childhood and boyhood passed away.

"It must be granted," says Ewald, "that in no ancient people has family life maintained itself so powerfully as in Israel, during the early days of the outward strength of the nation, or with so little weakening and deterioration as during the period of its gradual decline." In their patriarch Isaac and his wife Rebecca, they had an abiding ideal which it seemed the highest felicity to copy. Woman, among the Jews, was never so dependent and despised as among other Eastern races, for the Law proclaimed that she was bone of man's bone, and flesh of his flesh, and designed to be a helpmeet for him. In the picture of Eve as the one wife of Adam polygamy was indirectly censured, and it was no less so in the command given in Eden, that "a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and that they should be one flesh." Hence it was never in much favour among the Jews, and gradually gave place to the original law. Indeed, it was at any time rather a feature of royal or princely ostentation than a characteristic of ordinary life.

The Book of Proverbs throws great light on the position of woman in Israel, and, incidentally, on her place and occupations in the household. "A gracious woman," we are told, "retaineth honour;" "a wise woman buildeth her house," that is, establishes her family; and "the price of a virtuous woman is set far above that of rubies." Instead of being the playthings or slaves of man, women are taught that they may be his helpers and noblest friends. "The heart of the husband of the virtuous woman," says King Lemuel,

"Doth safely trust in her, so that he shall not want for gain.
She will do him good and not harm all the days of her life.
She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh with diligent hands.
She is like the merchant ships; she bringeth her food from afar.
She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household,
And the day's work to her maidens.
She considereth a field and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.
She girdeth her loins with strength, and maketh strong her arms.
She sees that her trading yields good profit: her lamp is kept burning by night.
She lays her hands on the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff.
She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.

She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her children are clothed with scarlet wool.
She maketh herself robes: her clothing is silk and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.
She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
Strength and honour are her clothing; and she smiles at days to come.
She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
She looketh well to the ordering of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.
Her sons rise up and praise her; her husband also, and he extols her;—
'Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.'
Gracefulness is deceitful, and beauty is a breath, but a woman that fears Jehovah, she shall be praised.
Give her the honour that the fruit of her hands deserves; her works are the praise of all, in the gates."

No literature of any age offers a finer ideal of the Wife and Mother than this Hebrew poem, written not less than two thousand five hundred years ago, when the history of Greece was still the era of fable, and Rome was little more than a rude fort on the top of the Palatine hill. That it is a separate poem, inserted in this collection of Proverbs, is seen from its construction, each verse beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in regular order, with the design, no doubt, of helping the memory to retain it. For hundreds of years before Mary's day it had been on the lips of every Jewish maiden, for the words of the sacred books were familiar to the whole Jewish race, as no part of any other literature, so far as we know, has ever been to any people. The picture of loving fidelity, ceaseless industry, prudence, management, charity, thrift, wisdom, self-respect; of noble reverence, rising from the husband on earth to God above, and of motherly virtues towards her children, must have kindled high aspirations in many a Jewish wife. It cannot be wrong to believe that, in her sphere, Mary realized this ideal, both in her activities and in her character, and that it had its share in the spiritual development of her wondrous child.

The relation of the Jewish husband to his wife was equally striking. If he were her Isaac, she was his Rebecca. "A good wife is a great gift of God," says the son of Sirach, "to him that fears God is she given." "Joy to the man who has such a wife," says he again, "for the number of his days is doubled." "Honour your wife that you may be rich in the joy of your home," says the Talmud. "Is your wife little?" says another Jewish proverb, also quoted in the Talmud, "then bow down to her and speak"—that is, do nothing without her advice. "In eating and drinking," says a Rabbi, "let a

man keep within his means; in his own dress let him spend as his means allow; but let him honour his wife and children to the very edge of his power, for they are dependent on him, but he himself is dependent on God whose word made the world." The humour that marks the Jew in all ages made a butt of the man who, contrary to the better feeling of his people, ventured to take two wives. "Bald here, and bald there," says a Jewish proverb, in allusion to one who had two wives, one young and one old. The young one, said Jewish wit, pulled out the white hairs, and the old one the black, till his head was as smooth as an ivory ball!

The reverence of children towards their parents was carried to the sublime in Hebrew families. The child found the ideal of his obedience in Isaac's willingly yielding himself to death at his father's command. Every Hebrew child heard, from its earliest years, how the finger of God Himself had written on the tables of stone, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee;" and this command they found repeated again and again in the sacred Law. Disobedience to a father or mother was made a public crime, which the community might punish with death. Unworthy children were laid under the most awful threatenings of divine displeasure. The child read how Joseph, "when he met his father, fell on his neck and wept a good while," and "bowed himself to the earth before him," and how their great lawgiver "did obeisance to his father-in-law and kissed him." He knew the curse that fell on the son of Noah who failed in respect to his father, and read that the young were to "rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man." The tender care of an aged parent was regarded by every Jew as a sacred duty. The son of Sirach only repeated the sentiment of all Scripture when he said, "Honour thy father with thy whole heart, and forget not the sorrows of thy mother. Remember that thou wast begotten of them; and how canst thou recompense them the things that they have done for thee?" That a father and a mother's blessing was prized as sacred, and its being withheld regarded as the saddest loss, shows how deeply such teaching had sunk into the Jewish mind.

Family life, resting thus on the holiest duty and reverence, has been nowhere, in any age, more beautiful than it was, and still is, among the Jews. In the parents, moreover, the passionate love of offspring, characteristic of the race, doubtless hallowed these lofty sanctions. The children of a Jewish household were the centre round which its life and love moved. Full of affection and sensibility, the heart of a Jew was not content with loving only those of his own generation, but yearned to extend itself to others who would inherit the future. A childless marriage was the bitterest trial. The Rabbis went even so far as to say that childless parents were to be lamented as one would lament the dead. The purity of Jewish family life was proverbial even in antiquity. The surpassing morality of the ancient

Scriptures, and the illustrations of ideal virtue presented by such mothers in Israel as Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, and Susanna, shed a holiness over household relationship in Israel that was unknown elsewhere. The Talmud hardly goes too far when it ascribes to the fidelity of the wives of the nation in Egypt, its first deliverance, and its national existence, and a modern Jew is, perhaps, justified in believing that the bond of family love among his people is stronger than in any other race. "From the inexhaustible spring of Jewish family love," says he, "rise the saviours of the human race." "The Jewish women alone," says he justly, elsewhere, "have the sound principle to subordinate all other love to that of the mother." Alexander Weill puts into the mouth of the Jewish mother the words, "Dare any Jewish mother, worthy of the name, let the thought of 'love' in its ignoble sense, ever cross her mind? It seems to her no better than a vile apostasy. A Jewess dares love only God, her parents, her husband, and her children." Kompert ventures to repeat the audacious Jewish saying—"God could not be everywhere, and therefore He made mothers." "The mother's love," he continues, "is the basis of all family life in Jewish romances; its passion, its mystery. The same type of the Jewish mother is found in all alike." It is true in all ages, as Douglas Jerrold put it, that she who rocks the cradle rules the world. The earliest years of a child are the most receptive. "It learns more in the first three or four than in all its after life," says Lord Brougham. The character of the mother, her care, her love, her looks, her soul, repeat themselves in the child while it is yet in her arms or at her knees.

It is not too much, then, to ascribe supreme influence to Mary, in the development of her wondrous child. Wordsworth's sonnet is only the adequate utterance of what must have been daily realized in the cottage at Nazareth:—

> "Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncross'd
> With the least shade or thought to sin allied;
> Woman! above all women glorified;
> Our tainted Nature's solitary boast;
> Purer than foam on central ocean toss'd:
> Brighter than Eastern skies at daybreak strewn
> With fancied roses, than the unblemish'd moon,
> Before her wane begins on heav'n's blue coast;
> Thy Image falls to earth. Yet some, I ween,
> Not unforgiven the suppliant knee might bend,
> As to a visible Power, in whom did blend
> All that was mix'd and reconciled in Thee
> Of mother's love with maiden purity,
> Of high with low, celestial with terrene!"

That both parents of a Jewish child took an active part in its early education is shown by the instance of Susanna, of whom we are told that "her parents also were righteous, and taught their daughter according to the law of Moses," and by that of Timothy, "who, from a child, had known the Holy Scriptures;" his grandmother, Lois, and

his mother, Eunice, having been, by implication, his teachers. But it was on the father, especially, that the obligation lay, to teach his children, of both sexes, the sacred Law and the other Scriptures, the knowledge of which constituted almost exclusively the sum of Jewish education. Abraham had found divine favour on the express ground that he "would command his children and his household after him, and they should keep the way of Jehovah;" and express injunctions required every father to teach the sacred history of his nation, with the great deeds and varying fortunes of his ancestors, and the words of the Law, "diligently" to his children, and to talk of them while sitting in the house, or walking by the way, when they retired to rest, and when they rose for the day. It was, indeed, required by the Rabbis that a child should begin to learn the Law by heart, when five years old. As soon as it could speak it had in the same way to learn the lessons and petitions of the morning service. At the frequently recurring household religious feasts, special rites, which should stir the child to ask their meaning, formed a regular part. The book of Proverbs abounds with proofs of the fidelity with which these commands were carried out by both fathers and mothers. In a virtuous home no opportunity was lost—at the table, at home or abroad, evening or morning—of instilling reverence for God's law into the minds of the family, and of teaching them its express words throughout, till they knew them by heart. When we remember that the festivals made labour unlawful for two months in each year, in the aggregate, it is evident that the leisure thus secured would give great facilities for domestic instruction.

Such had been, for ages, the rule in Israel, and it doubtless still prevailed in many households. Elementary schools, however, gradually came to be felt a necessity for orphan children, and, in the decline of manners, even for those of many living parents. Whether they had been generally established in the days of Christ's childhood has, nevertheless, been questioned. "If any man," says the Talmud, "deserves that his name should be handed down to posterity, it is Joshua, the son of Gamaliel. For, but for him the knowledge of the Law would have perished in Israel. In early times he who had a father was taught, but he who had not, did not learn the Law. For they were commanded in the words of the Law, 'you'—doubtless the fathers—'shall teach them.' At a later date it was ordered that schoolmasters should be appointed to teach the youth of Jerusalem, because it is written, 'The law shall go forth from Zion.' But this plan did not remedy the evil, for only the child that had a father was sent to school, while he who had none was not sent. It was therefore provided that higher teachers should be appointed in every district, and that the youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age should attend their schools. But this plan failed, because any scholar whom the master chastised presently ran off. Then, at last, Joshua, the son of Gamaliel, ordained that teachers should be appointed, as in every district,

so in every town, to whom the boys from the sixth or seventh year of their age should be committed." But such a law must have been only supplementary to already existing customs, and it cannot be doubted that boys' schools were already general in the time of Christ.

The enthusiasm of the Jews for education, which, in their sense of the word, was the learning to read "the Law," and the committing it to memory, was amazing. "A town in which there is no school must perish." "Jerusalem was destroyed because the education of the children was neglected," says the Talmud. Josephus tells us that "Moses commanded that the children be taught to read, and to walk in the ways of the Law, and to know the deeds of their fathers, that they might imitate them, and that they might neither transgress the Law nor have the excuse of ignorance." He repeatedly boasts of the universal zeal that prevailed for the education of the young. "We interest ourselves more about the education of our children than about anything else, and hold the observance of the laws, and the rules of piety they inculcate, as the weightiest business of our whole lives." "If you ask a Jew any matter concerning the Law, he can more readily explain it than tell his own name. Since we learn it from the first beginning of intelligence, it is, as it were, graven on our souls." "Our legislator neither left practical enforcement to go on without verbal instruction, nor did he permit the hearing of the Law to proceed without its illustration in practice; but beginning his laws from the earliest infancy, with the appointment of every one's diet, he left no act of life, of the very smallest consequence, at the pleasure and disposal of the person himself." This passage throws light on the kind of instruction imparted. Philo, a contemporary of Christ, bears similar testimony. "Since the Jews," says he, "look on their laws as revelations from God, and are taught them from their earliest childhood, they bear the image of the Law on their souls." "They are taught," says he elsewhere, "so to speak, from their very swaddling clothes, by their parents, masters, and teachers, in the holy laws, and in the unwritten customs, and to believe in God, the one Father and Creator of the world." Josephus boasts that at fourteen he had so thorough a knowledge of the Law, that the high priests and first men of the town sought his opinion. There can, indeed, be no question that a boy was trained, from the tenderest years, with sedulous care, in a knowledge of the moral and ceremonial laws of Judaism, not only as written in Scripture, but as explained, in endless detail, by the "traditions" and rules of the Rabbis. At the age of thirteen he became a "son of the Law," and was bound to practise all its moral and ritual requirements.

The age at which children were to be sent to school is fixed in the Mischna. Raf said to Samuel, the son of Schilath, a teacher, "Do not take a boy to be taught before he is six years old, but from that year receive him, and train him as you do the ox, which, day by day, bears a heavier load." Even the number of scholars a teacher might

take is rigidly fixed. "Rabba (or Raf) has said, a schoolmaster may receive to the number of twenty-five scholars. If there be fifty, there must be two schoolmasters; if only forty, there must be an assistant, who is to be paid, half by the congregation, half by the schoolmaster." The few children who were not sent to school, from whatever cause, were called Am-ha-aretz, or boors—it being taken for granted that they must have lived in some rude district where schools were not easy of access. Neither unmarried men or women were allowed to be teachers. The Hazan or "minister" of the nearest synagogue was, in general, the master, and the synagogue itself, in a great many cases, served as the school-house.

In school the children, according to their age, sat on benches, or on the ground, as they still do in the East, the master sitting on a raised seat. The younger children had, as text-books, some simple passage from the Bible, carefully written out—for, of course, there were no books, in our sense, then—and they seem to have repeated it in a sing-song cadence till they learned it by heart. In Eastern schools, at this time, some of the lessons are written by each scholar, with chalk, on tablets of wood, like our slates in shape, and these are cleaned after each lesson. Some centuries after Christ, the boys, having had portions of the "Law" as their class-book till they were ten years old, began at that age to read the Mischna, or Rabbinical comments, and at fifteen entered on the reading of the Gemara, or the collected comments on both the Law and the Mischna. In Christ's day, advanced education was, no doubt, much the same, but it must have been given by oral instruction, for the sayings of the Rabbis were not as yet committed to writing.

The early years of Christ were, doubtless, spent in some such school, after He had passed from the first lessons of Mary, and the instructions of Joseph. Mysterious as it is to us, we must never forget that, as a child, He passed through the same stages as other children. The Apocryphal Gospels are full of miracles attributed to these opening years, describing the infant as already indefinitely beyond His age. There is no warrant for this in Scripture. Nothing was out of keeping in the life of our Lord. As Irenæus says, "He sanctified childhood by passing through it." Neither His words nor acts, His childish pleasures nor His tears, were different from those of His age. Evil alone had no growth in Him: His soul gave back to the heavens all their sacred brightness. The ideal of humanity from His birth, He never lost the innocence of childhood, but He was none the less completely like other children in all things else. We are told that "the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit;" that "the favour of God was upon Him," and that "He kept on increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man;" and this can only mean that, with a sweet attractiveness of childish nature, He spoke, and understood, and thought, as simply as His playmates, in the fields, or on the hillsides, of Nazareth. The earlier words are the same as are used of

John the Baptist in his childhood, and can bear only the same meaning. Both grew in the shade of a retired country life, in the sanctuary of home, apart from the great world, under the eyes of God, and with His grace upon them. It was only in later years that the mighty difference between them was seen, when the fresh leaves of childhood, much alike in all, passed into flower. There was no moment in Christ's life when the higher light began to reveal itself in His soul-life and "grace" dawned together, and grew in a common increase to the end.

CHAPTER XIII.

EARLY BOYHOOD.

THE religious life of the home, the Church, and the community necessarily mould, more or less, the susceptible nature of children, and we may be certain that "the child Jesus" was no exception, in this respect, more than in others, to the general law. His opening being must have reflected all that was good around Him, as the flower reflects the colours of the light.

Rabbinism was then in its full glory. The strong hand of Herod the Great had suppressed all political agitation for more than a generation, with the result of turning the attention of the Rabbis supremely to religious questions, which alone were left for their discussion. The ten thousand legal definitions and decisions, which are now comprised in Jewish religious jurisprudence, were for the most part elaborated in those years, and every devout Israelite made it the labour of his life to observe them faithfully, as far as possible. It must not, therefore, shock us, accustomed as we are to feel that religious acts lose their value when not free and spontaneous, to find minute prescriptions laid down and observed in Judea, for every detail of public and private life and worship. The whole existence of a Jew was religious, but it was a religiousness which, while the right spirit might not be wanting, was yet elaborately mechanical at every step.

The East is essentially different in its spirit from the West. Here, the idea of improvement and advancement leads to incessant changes; there, an intense conservatism retains the past with superstitious tenacity. Orientals cling, by nature, to the old, merely as such. Novelty of any kind is painful and annoying. They resist the least innovation. The customs of their fathers are law; use and wont are sacred. They are graver and quieter than we. Noisy amusements have little attraction for them; they seldom laugh or joke. The play of wit, dreamy thoughtfulness, attractive narrations and inventions, religious observances, and the display of religious festivals, are their sufficing delights. We must guard, therefore, against looking at Oriental life through Western eyes.

A devout Jew began his daily religious life with his first waking

moments. "Every Israelite," says Maimonides, "should be penetrated at all times by reverence for his Almighty Creator. The central thought of the godly and devout man is—'I have set the Lord continually before me.' As if he stood before a king of flesh and blood, he should never forget the requirements of right conduct and ceremonial purity." He was taught that his first thoughts, as soon as he waked, should be directed to the worship of God. Sleep was regarded as a kind of death, in which the soul leaves the body, to return to it on its awaking, and hence the first words of revived consciousness were an acknowledgment before "the living and everlasting King, of His having given back the soul for another day, in His great mercy and faithfulness." Thanks for new life thus granted followed in something like this form:—"My God, the soul which Thou hast given me is clean. Thou hast created it, formed it, and breathed it into me, and Thou wilt take it from me, and restore it me again. While this soul lives in me, I thank Thee, O Eternal One, my God, and the God of my fathers! Lord of all works! King of all souls! Praised be Thou, O Eternal, Thou who puttest the souls again into dead bodies!"

Having risen from bed, it was not allowed to move four steps before washing the hands and face, which the Rabbis taught was needed to cleanse one from the defilement of sleep, as the image of death. It was unlawful to touch the face, or any other part of the body, till this was done, nor could it be done except in the form prescribed. Lifting the ewer, after dressing, with the right hand, it must be passed into the left, and clear cold water, Rabbinically clean, must be poured thrice over the right hand, the fingers of which must be open, and must point to the ground. The left hand must then be washed in the same way, with water poured on it from the right, and then the face must be washed three times. The palms of the hands must then be joined, with the thumbs and fingers outstretched, and the words must be uttered—"Lift up your hands to the sanctuary, and praise the Lord!" Then followed the prayer, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God! King of the universe! Thou who hast sanctified us through Thy commandments, and hast required us to wash the hands. Blessed art Thou, O Eternal, our God, King of the universe: who hast formed man in wisdom, and hast made in him many vessels. If but one of these stood open, or was stopped, man could not live and remain before Thee. This is evident, and confessed before the throne of Thy majesty. Blessed art Thou, O Eternal One, maintainer of all flesh, who in Thy Creation doest wonders!"

With some such forms and words, the morning began in Joseph's house in Nazareth. But this was only the preparation for morning prayers. It was not lawful to do any work, or to eat any food, till these had been repeated, either at home, or more properly, in the synagogue, where they formed the daily morning service. I shall describe them when I come to speak of the synagogue worship.

The religiousness of the first moments of the day was only in keeping with the whole life of a devout Jew like Joseph. I have mentioned the morning first because our day begins then, but that of the Jew began in the evening. From the beginning of each day—that is, from the appearance of the first star—to its close, and from the first day of the week till the Sabbath; from the beginning of each month to its feasts and half-feasts; from each New Year's Day to the next; and from one Sabbath year—that is, each seventh year—till another, the attention of every Jew was fixed unintermittedly on the sacred usages which returned either daily, weekly, or at set times, and kept his religion continually in his mind, not only by symbolical rites, but by prescribed words. There was little leisure for the lighter pleasures of life, and little taste for them. Lengthened prayers in set forms had to be repeated three times each day, and also at all feasts, half-feasts, and fast days; each kind of day having its special prayers. In every week there was a preparation day for the Sabbath, and there were similar preparation days for each feast in the different months; public worship was held twice weekly, each Monday and Thursday, and on feast days and holy days. Three pilgrimages to Jerusalem were required yearly, and others were often undertaken. A whole week was occupied by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and by that of Tabernacles, and by the Feast of the Dedication. Every Jew was, moreover, occupied to a large extent, through his connection with the Temple, by tithes, sacrifices, and vows. He visited the Holy Place as often as possible, for prayer, and to offer special gifts. He had to pay the most minute attention, continually, to permitted and forbidden food and clothing, and to the strict observance of all laws respecting the accessories of his public and private worship, his rolls of the Law, his phylacteries, the blowing of trumpets, the gathering of palm twigs at the right times, and much more. The endless rules respecting the cleanness and uncleanness of persons and things, demanded the greatest care every hour. Both men and women, as such, had many details to observe. Then, there were the ever-recurring usages, festivities, or events of family life—circumcisions, betrothals, marriages, divorces, deaths, and mourning; the laws of the Sabbath year, recurring periodically, and many other diversified occurrences, which had each its prolixity of religious form, not to be overlooked. Besides all, extraordinary solemnities were appointed on special occasions, and these, again, made grave demands on the thoughtful care of the whole population. No wonder that the Law was almost the one thing in a Jew's mind, nor that a child brought up in such an atmosphere should, in most cases, be blindly conservative and narrow.

Opportunity will be taken hereafter to illustrate what life under the Law really was, but even without the statement of details, it is evident that a system which spread its close meshes over the whole of life, must have been a heavy burden on the conscientious, and a fruitful source of hypocrisy and dead formality to the mass. The hedge

invented by Rabbinism was a unique expansion of a few written precepts to infinite detail. Artificial interpretations of Scripture, often contrary to the sense, and even to the letter of the Law, were invented as occasion required, and then enforced as of more authority than the Law itself. The Rabbi could "bind and loose;" no case escaped his casuistry: religion was turned into a lifelong slavery, so burdensome, that even the Talmud itself speaks of "the vexatious worry of the Pharisees." Ethics and theology were refined into an elaborate system of jurisprudence, till even where the requirements were right, their morality was poisoned in its principles, and deadened the fresh pulses of spiritual life.

Still there were many in Israel who retained more or less of the primitive godliness of the nation. If Rabbinism, as a system, had fallen from its earlier and nobler idea of binding the nation permanently to the true faith; if it had substituted teaching for a change of heart; legality for spontaneous fidelity; endless prescriptions for the life-giving spirit, there were not a few, alike among the Rabbis and the people, to whom the external was not all. There may have been a Rabbi at Nazareth as self-righteous as Nechimza Ben Hakana, who, when he left his school, was wont to pray—"I thank Thee, O Lord, my God, that Thou hast given me my portion among those who frequent the House of Instruction, and not among those who are busy at the street corners, for I rise early, and they rise early; I apply myself early to the Law, and they to vain things; I work, and they work; I work and receive my reward, they work and receive none; I run, and they run; I run after eternal life, and they to the pit." But there may have been, also, another, like the Rabbi of Jamnia, who told his scholars, "I am a creature of God, and my fellow-man is no less so. I have my calling in the town, he, his, in the field. I go early to my work, and he to his. As he is not made proud by his labour, I am not made proud by mine. If you think that I am busied with great matters and he with small, remember that true work, whether great or small, leads to the same end."

The child Jesus, must have often heard in the house of such a man as Joseph, and in those of his neighbours of like mind with him, whom he visited, a healthy intelligent religiousness, beautiful in any age. The popular proverbs and sayings which have come down to us may easily bring back many an evening scene in Nazareth, when friends or neighbours of Joseph's circle met for an hour's quiet gossip, when their day's toil was over. "Quite true, neighbour," we may fancy one of such a group saying, "he who knows the Law and has no fear of God, is like the ruler of the synagogue who has only the key of the inner door, but not of the outer." "Yes, Zecharyah, a God-fearing Rabbi is like a good player who has his harp with him, but a godless Rabbi is like one who has nothing on which to make music." "You speak truly, Menahem; a godly man is the glory of a town, its reward, and its ornament; if he leave it, its glory, its re-

ward, and its ornament, leave it with him." "My father used to tell me," chimes in Hananyah Ben Hizkiyah, "that there are four who never have the face of God lifted upon them—the scoffer, the liar, the hypocrite, and the slanderer." "Rabbi Nathan," says the fifth, "is right, I think; I have heard him say that the man who stands firm in temptation, and the hour of whose death is like that of his birth, is the only man to be envied."

Good counsels to the young were not wanting. The Hazan who taught the Nazareth school in the synagogue, may have told his scholars—"Get close to the seller of perfumes if you want to be fragrant." He may have given the groups of little ones at his feet words of wisdom such as these—that "grapes on vines are beautiful, and in their right place; but grapes among thorns are neither." "A Nazarite should go round about, rather than come near a vineyard." "A friend who, as often as he meets you, tells you, in secret, your faults, is better than one who, whenever he meets you, gives you a gold piece." "If you see an humble man, you may almost take for granted that he fears God, but a proud man is no better than an idolater." "Make the best of your childhood; youth is a crown of roses; old age of thorns. Yet do not fear death, it is only a kiss, if you fear God." "Truth is the seal of God." "Trust in the mercy of God, even if the sharp sword be at your throat; He forsakes none of His creatures to give them up to destruction." "Take a lesson from Jose Ben Joezer, who was the first Jew ever crucified. He died for his faith in the evil time of the Syrian kings. As he was being led to death, his sister's son, Alkim, tried to make him believe that God showed more favour to transgressors of the Law than to the godly. He could have saved Jose's life, if the martyr had yielded to him. But Jose only answered, 'If God prepares such a fate as mine for the godly, what will become of the wicked?'—and passed on to the cross." "The humble man is he who is as reverent before God as if he saw Him with his eyes."

A wise teacher may have spoken thus to the children in the school, but wise counsels would not be wanting at home. Like all Orientals, Joseph was, doubtless, given to speak in proverbs and parables. "One sheep follows another," he might have said. "As is the mother, so is the daughter." "A man without friends is like the left hand without the right." "The road has ears, and so has the wall." "It is no matter whether a man have much or little, if his heart be set on heaven." "A good life is better than high birth." "The bread and the rod came from heaven together." "Seeking wisdom when you are old is like writing on water; seeking it when you are young is like graving on stone." "Every word you speak, good or bad, light or serious, is written in a book." "Fire cannot keep company with flax without kindling it." "In this world a man follows his own will; in the next comes the judgment." "With the same measure with which a man measures to others it will be meas-

ured to him again." "Patience, and silence in strife, are the sign of a noble mind." "He who makes the pleasures of this world his portion, loses those of the world to come; but he who seeks those of heaven, receives, also, those of earth." "He who humbles himself will be exalted by God; but he who exalts himself, him will God humble." "Whatever God does is right." "Speech is silver; silence is worth twice as much." "Sin hardens the heart of man." "It is a shame for a plant to speak ill of him who planted it." "Two bits of dry wood set a moist one on fire." All these are Jewish sayings, which Jesus may well have heard in His childhood.

Nazareth would, no doubt, have its finer spirits who, from time to time, shed the light of their higher nature over family gatherings, and none of this could be lost on such a child as Jesus. On some glorious night, when the moon was walking in brightness, a mind like this may have told the children round him some such fine Hebrew apologue as follows:—

"The Eternal sent forth His creating voice, saying, 'Let two lights shine in the firmament, as kings of the earth, and dividers of the revolving year.'

"He spake, and it was done. The sun rose as the first Light. As a bridegroom comes forth in the morning from his chamber; as a hero rejoices on his triumphal march, so rose he, clothed in the splendour of God. A crown of all hues encircled his head; the earth rejoiced, the plants sent up their odours to him, and the flowers put on their best array.

"The other Light looked on with envy, as it saw that it could not outvie the Glorious One in splendour. 'What need is there,' it asked, murmuring to itself, 'of two kings on one throne? Why was I the second instead of the first?'

"Forthwith its brightness faded, chased away by its inward chagrin. It flew from it high through the air, and became the Host of Stars.

"The Moon stood pale as the dead, ashamed before all the heavenly ones, and wept—'Have pity on me, Father of all creatures, have pity.'

"Then the angel of God stood before the Sad One, and told her the decree of the Highest. 'Because thou has envied the light of the Sun, unhappy one, henceforth thou wilt only shine by his light, and when yonder earth comes between thee and him thou wilt stand darkened, in part, or entirely, as now.

"'Yet, Child of Error, weep not. The Merciful One has forgiven thy sin, and turned it to good for thee. "Go," said He, "speak comfortably to the Sorrowful One; she will be, at least, a queen, in her brightness. The tears of her sorrow will be a balm to quicken all living things, and renew the strength which the beams of the Sun have made faint."'

"The Moon went away comforted, and, lo, there streamed round

her that brightness in which she still shines· she set forth on that peaceful path in which she still moves, as Queen of the Night and leader of the stars. Lamenting her sin, and pitying the tears of men, she seeks whom she can revive, and looks for any one she can cheer."

Such, no doubt, would be some of the characteristics of Nazareth life. Every one would know every one; industry and idleness; worth and vice; pleasure and sadness; would be around the growing Child. The oxen ploughing the little valley below the town and the great plain outside, would often arrest his eyes; the asses and mules, and camels laden with goods or produce, would pass then, as now, up the mountain track to the narrow Nazareth streets: the different trades of the village would be busy, as they are still. The wise and the simple: the clown and the scholar: the poor and the rich: the soiled workman and the proud squire: helpless infancy, and as helpless age; the school, the play-ground, the market, the court, the synagogue, and the cemetery, would each in turn be prominent for the time. But it would be under Joseph's roof, as in a silken nest, with the counsels of Joseph, and the gentle and lofty devoutness of Mary, that the young soul, destined one day to be so great, would learn its richest lessons of childhood.

At a very early age, Jesus would be taken to the synagogue with Joseph and Mary, and the other children of the Nazareth family circle, for even then that institution had become the banner of Jewish nationality, the centre of national life, and the ægis of the Jewish faith, whose services no Israelite would think of neglecting.

The importance of the Synagogue dates not later than the age of the Maccabees. It rose from the institution, by Ezra, of periodical readings of the Law in public. Its earliest history is not known, for we can hardly trust the Rabbinical traditions, that there were hundreds in Jerusalem under the second Temple. But the germ of the Synagogue doubtless existed in Babylon. The exiles could no longer offer their sacrifices, for this could be done only in the Temple at Jerusalem. Hence they naturally betook themselves to prayer, and lifted their hands, in their loneliness, to God, at the times when their sacrifices were wont to be consumed. Instead of these they presented their prayers, and prophets like Ezekiel, on the Sabbath, spoke to them of their duty. It would seem as if the Law itself had been well-nigh unknown during the exile, from the fact of Ezra summoning the people to hear it, as something which they had transgressed, from ignorance of its requirements. To him, apparently, belongs the signal honour of establishing the custom of constant public reading of the sacred books before the congregations of the people, and of taking care that, as Hebrew was no longer understood, interpreters should be provided, to translate the Scripture lessons, at the public services, into the spoken dialect. Established, first, in Jerusalem, synagogues soon spread over the land, and even beyond it, wherever Jews had settled. They gradually became the great

characteristic of the nation, for, though the services of the Temple were yet cherished, the Synagogue, by its local convenience, its supreme influence in fixing Jewish religious opinion, and its natural importance as the centre of each community, and the basis of their social life, carried with it the seeds of the destruction of the strictly local Temple service. The priest, henceforth, was of less importance than the lay Rabbi, for while the one touched life at only a few points, the other directed its every movement. In Christ's day there were synagogues everywhere. In Jerusalem, alone, there gradually rose, according to the Talmud, no fewer than 480. Tiberias had thirteen, Damascus ten, and other cities and towns in proportion to their population. But the Mother Synagogue in the Temple still remained, as it were, the model after which all other synagogues were organized.

Wherever ten Jews were settled, it was incumbent on them to form themselves into a congregation, and have synagogue service. Open structures on the banks of rivers, or on the sea-shore were preferred, where the Jewish population was small, from their convenience for the necessary purifications; but, wherever it was possible, a synagogue was erected by the free contributions of the people. Sometimes, indeed, a rich man built one at his own expense. The ruins of those in Galilee, Christ's own country, enable us to learn many particulars respecting this locality at least. In selecting sites, the builders by no means always chose prominent positions. If, in some cases, the Rabbinical requirements were observed that the synagogue should be raised on the highest part of the town, and its entrance be on the western side, they were, seemingly, more frequently neglected. The ruins of the old synagogues in the district on the Sea of Galilee, and north of it, are sometimes in the lower part of the town, and at others have had a site excavated for them in the rocky side of a hill. Their entrances are almost always at the southern end, an arrangement hardly to have been expected, as it required every Jew, on entering, to turn his back to Jerusalem.

The building was always rectangular, with its longest dimension in a nearly south and north direction, and its interior divided into five aisles, by four rows of columns, unless it was very small, when two rows of columns were used, making only three aisles. The walls were well and solidly built of native limestone: the stones "chiselled" into each other, without mortar, and, while finely dressed outside, left rough on the inner side, for plastering. The entrances were three in number; one large doorway, opening into the central aisle, and a smaller one on each side, though sometimes, in small synagogues, there was only one entrance. Folding doors, with socket hinges, closed by bars on the inside, gave them security. Over the doors was more ornament that we might have expected—sculptures of the golden candlestick—or of the pot of manna—or of the paschal lamb—or the vine. The floors were paved with slabs of

white limestone, and the arrangement of the columns was the same in all. The spaces between these were very small, though the columns themselves were sometimes elaborately finished with Corinthian and Ionic capitals. Blocks of stone laid from column to column received the wooden rafters, which were bedded deeply in these supports for strength, and were very broad as well as thick, to bear up a flat roof, covered heavily with earth, which was the fashion in private houses also, as it still is in nearly all Arab dwellings, as best adapted for keeping out the intense heat of the sun. The ruins are too imperfect to show the arrangement of the windows.

The synagogues were open every day for three services, but as those of the afternoon and evening were always joined, there were, in reality, only two. It was the duty of every godly Jew to go to each service, for so sacred was daily attendance, that the Rabbis taught that "he who practised it saved Israel from the heathen." The two market days, Monday and Thursday, when the country people came into town, and when the courts were held, and the Sabbaths, were the special times of public worship. Feast days, and fasts, were also marked by similar sacredness.

The interior of the synagogues was arranged, as far as possible, after the model of the Tabernacle or the Temple. Before the doors of some, a sunken space for a porch formed a counterpart to the forecourt of the sanctuary. The space immediately inside was for the congregation. A little beyond the middle, a raised and enclosed platform, in the centre of the floor, in some measure corresponded to the altar. Here the official stood to conduct the services, by reading from the sacred books and chanting the prayers. In the wall at the farther end was a recess, before which hung a veil; the recess the equivalent of the Holy of Holies; the veil, of the one before that mysterious chamber in the Temple. In this shrine were kept the Sacred Rolls, wrapped in several covers of linen and silk; the outer one adorned, as means allowed, with gold and silver. The Rabbis required that this shrine should look towards Jerusalem, but this was not generally provided for in the Galilean synagogues of Christ's day. Before the shrine hung an ever-burning lamp—the representative of the "eternal fire" in the holy place in the Temple. Beside it stood a large eight-branched lamp, like the "golden candlestick" of the Temple, which we now see sculptured on the Arch of Titus. It was adorned with inscriptions, and was kept for the illumination made at the Feast of the Dedication, each December, when the joy of the nation at the rekindling of the lamps in the Temple, after the triumph of Judas Maccabæus, was celebrated for eight days together. Other lamps hung up and down the synagogue to illuminate it during the Sabbath evening service, whether needed or not, in honour of the day, as was done also in private houses. Rabbis and the elders of the Synagogue sat on raised cushions next the shrine, facing the people, in the "chief seats." The men of the congregation filled the open floor next these,

and in small synagogues, the women, separated by a lattice, sat with their backs to the men. Where space allowed, however, a flat gallery was built for them, but, in any case, they were not visible to the other sex. Trumpets for proclaiming the new moon, and for publishing sentences of excommunication, formed part of the furniture, but were kept in the house of the Hazan. In the porch was a tablet with prayers for the reigning prince, and another with the names of any who had been excommunicated, while below them were boxes to receive the alms of the congregation, as they entered, for the poor.

The greatest reverence was paid by every Jew to his synagogue. It could not be built near a public bath, or a wash-house, or a tannery, and if it were taken down no one would on any account cross the ground on which it had stood.

The chief authorities of the Synagogue were a council of elders, of whom one acted as head, though only the first among equals. They pronounced excommunications, delivered sentences on offenders of various kinds, managed the charities of the congregation, and attended to the wants of strangers. They were a local counterpart of the "elders of the people," who, through the whole history of Israel, formed a kind of national senate, and of those humbler "elders" who constituted the ruling body over towns and districts, as they formerly had also done over the different tribes. It marks the simple and healthy basis of society in Israel, that the one idea of the family and household, ruled by its head, thus lay at its root, as is indeed implied in the very name—House of Israel—by which the nation, as a whole, was known. The head ruler or elder of the Synagogue was formally consecrated by the laying on of hands.

The inferior offices were held by various officials. The Hazan, or "minister," had the charge of the building, of cleaning the lamps, opening and closing the doors, and doing any other necessary servile work, like a modern sexton, besides acting as messenger to the rulers. But he, also, in many cases, led the prayers and chants. It was his part to hand the roll of the Law to the Reader for the time, pointing out the proper lesson of the day. The Reader, as representative of the congregation, had to blow the trumpet at the new moon, and to strew ashes on his head on fast days. The alms of the congregation were collected and distributed by special officers, of whom two were required to act together in the receiving: three in the distribution. There seems to have been no functionary for reading the prayers, which was done in the name of the congregation, and by its authority, by any one empowered for the time. Any member of the congregation, unless he were a minor, was qualified to do so. As a rule, however, it is likely that the Hazan generally led the chanting, and read the ordinary lessons. A curious feature in the organization was, that in each synagogue, ten men, known as Batlanim, were paid to attend every service from its opening to its close, that there might never be fewer present than the Rabbis required to constitute a lawful service.

There seems to have been only one synagogue in Nazareth, so that, as all the Jews in the town doubtless attended it, a large proportion of the population must have been other than Israelites, or the town itself must have been small, to judge from the size of other synagogues of Galilee, whose ruins have been discovered. The congregation would, in many respects, be very different from Western notions. The men came in the long, flowing, and, to us, feminine-looking dress of the East; their heads covered with turbans of various colours—some simple, others costly—or with the plain keffiyeh, a kerchief of cotton, linen, or silk, of various colours, folded so that three of the corners hung over the back and shoulders, leaving the face exposed, and loosely held round the head by a cord—as is still the Arab custom; their clothing, only a long white or striped tunic, of linen or cotton, with sleeves, next the body—bound at the loins by a sash or girdle,—and a loose abba or cloak thrown over it; their bare feet shod with sandals. Over the abba some would wear a wide scarf of white wool, thin and light; with bars of red, purple, and blue; but with many, this scarf, enlarged to an abba, would be the only outer garment. A few rich men might, perhaps, wear one of silk, adorned with silver or gold. This was the Tallith, an indispensable part of the clothing of a Jew. From its four corners hung four tassels of eight threads a-piece, of hyacinth-blue, of wool alone, woven and made up with superstitious care, as a half religious art, by a Jew only. These were the Zizith, or fringes, worn in fulfilment of an express commandment of Moses, that the sight of them might make the wearer "remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." So sacred, indeed, were they, that a smaller Tallith, as well, duly provided with them, was worn underneath the clothing by every Jew, from his earliest years, and he had been taught, even in childhood, never to put it on without repeating the prayer—"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and given us the commandment of the fringes." The outer Tallith, indeed, was only worn because the fringes of this one were covered up, and could not be kissed, as the Rabbis required, from time to time, during one of the synagogue prayers. The right use of the lessons of the fringes a Jew believed equivalent to keeping the whole Law, for the Rabbis told him that, as the letters of the name Zizith, used as figures, made up the number 600, they and the five knots and eight threads, are equal to the whole 613 precepts of the Law.

The Jewish mothers and daughters of Nazareth, as they made their way to the synagogue, were not less Oriental and strange. They were always veiled in white at public worship, and not unfrequently at other times. Their flowing mantles showed as great variety of colour as female dress does now, but they were much the same in shape as they had been for centuries. Like many of the men, they wore turbans, but they showed a contrast to the other sex in their ornaments. On week days they wore nose rings, but they were not allowed to

wear these on the Sabbath, though they indulged in carrings, and metal armlets, and necklaces and leg rings, which tinkled as their wearers walked. Their feet, like those of the men, were shod with sandals. The males of a family might go to the synagogue any way they chose, but the women went only by back streets, to avoid the gaze of men. All, alike, were required to greet no one, and to make no reverence, whoever passed, nor to loiter by the way, lest it should distract their minds from thinking upon God. At the threshold all laid aside their sandals, for it was unbecoming to enter even one's own house with shod feet, far less the house of God; but, for the same reason, all kept their heads covered during the whole service. Every man, on entering, prepared to put on his Tephillin or phylacteries, which must be worn every day during morning prayer. They consisted of two small parchment boxes, about an inch square, one divided into four parchment compartments, the other left undivided. On the two sides was stamped the letter שׁ, as part of the word Shaddai—one of the names of the Almighty. Four slips of parchment, each about an inch wide and eight inches long, inscribed with the verses—Deut. vi. 4—9; Deut. ix. 13—21; Exod. xiii. 2—10; and Exod. xiii. 11—16, were placed in the different compartments of the one, a parchment lid enclosing the whole, with long leather thongs attached, to bind it on the forehead. The second box was exactly the same, except that its interior was not divided, and the verses of Scripture enclosed were written, in four columns, on *one* piece of parchment.

The former of these phylacteries, or amulets, was bound on the forehead exactly between the eyes, before morning prayer began; the other on the left arm, opposite the heart, its thongs being wound seven times round the arm and thrice round the middle finger. Their wearer was now ready to take part in the services. As in the case of the Tallith, the Tephillin were put on with words of prayer in the prevailing language of the country.

The worship of the synagogue was limited to prayer and reading the Law and the Prophets, for though a Rabbi or other person, if present, might be asked to speak, this was an addition to the prescribed forms. The service began with silent prayer by all present, the congregation standing during this as during all the prayers. Then the Reader, wearing his Tallith, having entered the raised enclosure in the middle of the synagogue, recited a prayer of adoration from the desk—"Blessed be Thou by whose word the world was created; blessed be Thou for ever! Blessed be Thou who hast made all out of nothing; blessed be He who orders and confirms; blessed be He who has pity on the earth; blessed be He who has pity on His creatures; blessed be He who richly rewards His saints; blessed be He who lives for ever, and is for ever the same; blessed be He, the Saviour and Redeemer! Blessed be Thy name! Blessed be Thou, O Eternal! Our God! King of the Universe! All-Merciful God and Father! Thy people utter Thy praise with their lips: Thy godly servants proclaim

Thy glory and honour. We would praise Thee, Eternal Lord God, with the psalms of Thy servant David; we would laud and magnify Thee with songs of thanksgiving and praise. We do homage to Thy name, our King, our God, the only One, He who liveth for ever, O Lord, whose name is glorious for ever and ever! Blessed be Thou, O Eternal! Lord, blessed be Thou in songs of praise!" To this, as to all prayers, the congregation answered, Amen.

Readings from different parts of the Scripture then followed, in part a collection of separate verses, in part connected extracts, ending with the last six Psalms, this introductory portion of the service closing with another short but exalted prayer. A few verses more from Scripture followed, and then came the Song of Moses at the Passage of the Red Sea, and another short prayer.

Presently the Reader summoned the congregation to join in a short responsive utterance of praise known as the Kadish. "Praise the Lord," said he, "who is worthy to be praised," and to this the people, bowing, responded, "Praised be the Lord, who is ever and eternally worthy of praise!" and so, through several antiphonies.

It was obligatory on every Jew to repeat certain verses twice every day, morning and evening. These were now read. They were known by the name of S'chma, or "Hear," from their beginning with the words, "Hear, O Israel, the Eternal, our God, is one Eternal God." Two prayers preceded them, the one, heard with joy and yet with trembling, exalting God for His Majesty in the heavens, amidst the armies of the angels. It was believed to be listened to by all heaven, God Himself and the angels responding, at its close—"Happy the people in such a case; happy the people whose God is Jehovah!" The other thanked God for His love to Israel, and asked enlightenment in His holy law. Another short prayer was now read, thanking Him for the mighty works He had done for their fathers, especially in delivering them from Egypt, and closing with supplication for delivery as a nation from their evil state. The closing words chanted by the Reader were striking—"Rock of Israel! up! to the help of Israel: save, for Thy promise sake, Judah and Israel! Save us, Eternal God, Eternal God of Hosts! whose name is the Holy One of Israel. Blessed be Thou, O Eternal, who of old didst redeem Israel!"

During all these prayers the congregation stood, with their faces towards the shrine of the Law. Only the Reader spoke: the congregation simply responded "Amen," except at the Kadish.

Now commenced the second part of the service—the repeating of the "prayers known as the eighteen Benedictions," or simply as "The Prayer." It was originally drawn up by the men of the Great Synagogue, but finally arranged in its present form, with one or two additional prayers, about the year 100 after Christ. The whole were spoken by the entire congregation softly, and then aloud by the Reader, and this was repeated at the evening service, it being required

of every Israelite that he should repeat them all, for himself, three times every day, just as he was required to repeat the S'chma twice daily. During this series of prayers the whole congregation stood, immovable, with their faces towards the shrine, and their feet close together, in an attitude of fixed devotion. At the beginning and close of the first and sixteenth Benedictions all bent the knee, and bowed their heads to the earth. As in the case of the S'chma, these prayers were read without the change or addition of a word. After the congregation had recited them the Reader, still standing in the raised enclosure, took three steps backwards, then three forwards: stood quite still, and commenced, "Lord, open Thou our lips, that our mouth may show forth Thy praise!" "I will call upon the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness unto our God!" The first three prayers of the eighteen contained ascriptions of praise, the last three thanksgivings, and the twelve between, supplications for the nation and for individuals. As the Reader closed, he recited the words—"We, here below, would hallow Thy name, as it is hallowed in heaven, as is written in the prophets—'One cried to another, and said——.'" The congregation then responded, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory!" Then the Reader began again: "They who stand before Him say, 'Blessed;'" and the congregation answered, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place." The Reader, once more, began: "In Thy holy Scripture it is written:" and the congregation answered, "The Lord shall reign for ever, even Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Hallelujah!"

On Mondays and Thursdays, and on Sabbaths, the Law was now read. For the Sabbaths, the five Books of Moses were divided into fifty sections, of seven lessons each, and a complete section was repeated each Sabbath, so that the Law was read through in a year. At the end of each lesson, and at its beginning, a collect was read, and between each, the Expositor—a member of the congregation who had been invited for the purpose, and who stood in the desk beside the Reader while the lesson was being read—delivered a short address from it. A priest, if present, had the first invitation, then a Levite, and any one who seemed to know the Law came after. The roll of the Prophets was handed to him by the Reader after the closing collect of the lesson. At each service there was thus a series of short comments. One Expositor gave a general address on the Law embodied in the lesson: another an exhortation based on it, and a third expounded the allegorical mysteries it shadowed forth. Each was, however, expected to illustrate the three cardinal points of Jewish piety—the love of God, of virtue, and of one's neighbour, this last duty being additionally enforced by a collection in the boxes at the door "for the land of Israel."

Very few relics of these synagogue addresses survive, but we are able even from these, as preserved in the Talmud, to realize their

general characteristics. Short, and in great measure made up of proverbs, natural imagery, and parables, they were very different from our sermons. One example will suffice. An ancient address from the same chapter of Isaiah from which Jesus took His text in the synagogue of Nazareth, runs thus—the special words commented on being, "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation:"—

"There are seven garments," says the speaker, "which the Holy One, blessed be His name, has put on since the world began, or will put on before the hour when He will visit with His wrath the godless Edom." When He created the world He clothed Himself in honour and glory, for it says: 'Thou art clothed with honour and glory.' When He showed Himself at the Red Sea He clothed Himself in majesty, for it says: 'The Lord reigneth, He is clothed with majesty.' When He gave the Law He clothed Himself with might, for it says: 'Jehovah is clothed with might, wherewith He hath girded Himself.' As often as He forgave Israel its sins He clothed Himself in white, for it says: 'His garment was white as snow.' When He punishes the nations of the world He puts on the garments of vengeance, for it says: 'He put on the garments of vengeance for clothing and was clad with zeal as a cloak.' He will put on the sixth robe when the Messiah is revealed. Then will He clothe Himself in righteousness, for it says: 'For He put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation on His head.' He will put on the seventh robe when He punishes Edom. Then will He clothe Himself in Adom (red), for it says: 'Wherefore art Thou red in Thine apparel?' But the robes with which He will clothe the Messiah will shine from one end of the world to the other, for it says: 'As a bridegroom who is crowned with his turban, like a priest.' And the sons of Israel will rejoice in His light, and will say, 'Blessed be the hour when the Messiah was born, blessed the womb which bore Him, blessed the eyes that were counted worthy to see Him. For the opening of His lips is blessing and peace, His speech is rest to the soul, the thoughts of His heart confidence and joy, the speech of His lips pardon and forgiveness, His prayer like the sweet-smelling savour of a sacrifice, His supplications holiness and purity.' O how blessed is Israel for whom such a lot is reserved, for it says: 'How great is Thy goodness which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee.'"

On Mondays and Thursdays the first of the seven lessons for the next Sunday was read, but it was divided into three portions, before each of which one of the congregation was called up to the desk.

A few prayers more from the Reader, and the service was ended, with a parting benediction delivered by a priest with uplifted hands, if one were present, if not, by the Reader. The prayers were repeated in the common dialect of Palestine as a rule, but in Greek towns, such as Cæsarea, they were also recited in Greek. The Hebrew or Chal-

dee of the Law or the Prophets was translated into the spoken language by an interpreter, who stood by the side of the Reader.

Such was the morning service. In the afternoon the congregation met once more; heard a shorter service, and remained, frequently, listening to addresses, till lamplight in the evening. The "Amen" of the congregation, from time to time, was the only interruption sanctioned, but among Orientals it would have been hopeless to enforce silence. Ever and anon a hearer volunteered assistance if the speaker hesitated, or corrected a mistake if he supposed one made, and the whole congregation, at times, signified aloud their agreement, shouted a contradiction, or even ordered the speaker to be silent.

When to the many prayers of the synagogue service we add those required in private life, the "vain repetitions" against which Christ cautioned His hearers on the Mount may be understood. Besides the five daily repetitions of the S'chma and the Benedictions, every Jew gave thanks before and after every act of eating or drinking, before, and, often, after, each of the countless external rites and exercises required of him; and there were, besides, special prayers for new moons, new years, feasts, half-feasts, and fasts, and many for special incidents of private or family life. Prayer, always prescribed in exact words, was in fact multiplied till it was in danger of becoming too often formal and mechanical—a mere outward act, of superstitious importance in itself, apart from the spirit in which it was offered.

Such a circle of synagogue service, constantly repeated, we must conceive the child Jesus to have frequented from His earliest years, day by day, and week by week.

The influence of an institution in which the Law was read, throughout, every year, on the Sabbath, and, in part, twice each week, with extra readings on special high days; in which the Prophets and Psalms were constantly brought before the congregation, and in which multiplied prayers, always the same, impressed on the mind every emotion and thought of the national religion, in language often grand and solemn in the extreme—must have been great. The synagogue was, in fact, the seed-bed of Judaism: its inspiring soul and its abiding nurture. It was in it that Jesus was first drawn into love and sympathy, as a child, for His people, and that He heard the rights, duties, and prospects, of the suffering people of God, and drank in a deep knowledge of the Law and the Prophets, by which, as St. Luke tells us, "He kept on growing in wisdom." The lessons He learned in it can be traced through the whole Gospels. The addresses He heard were no doubt, for the most part, lifeless Rabbinical refinements, with a Pharisaic colouring, which His pure and sinless soul, filled with the love of His heavenly Father, instinctively prized at their true value. His words in after life often show that He had been accustomed to see Pharisees and Scribes in the syn-

agogue, who made the Mondays and Thursdays, on which service was held, their days of fasting; who paraded a show of long prayers or of liberal alms; and eagerly pressed forward to the front seats, where they would be most in honour, and would be most likely to be called up to speak. As He grew older He would meet, in turn, in the synagogue, every shade of the religion of the day,—the strictness of the school of Shammai, and the mildness of that of Hillel; Jewish bigotry, and Galilæan freedom and tolerance; the latitudinarianism of the Sadducee, or the puritanical strictness of the Essene. The great doctrines of ceremonial purity, of the righteousness of works, of the kingdom of God, and of the coming redemption of Israel, would sound in His ears Sabbath by Sabbath, giving Him much to retain and still more to reject. In the synagogue He came in contact with the religious life of His race, in its manifold aspects. We see, in His public life, how the crowds that gathered round Him, as the new Rabbi of Israel, entered into conversation with Him on the subjects of His discourse, or commented on them afterwards, and He had, no doubt, done much the same with the teachers He heard in His earlier years. The Rabbis whom He met in the synagogues, in the markets, or at meals, were accustomed to exchange question and answer with all, and must often have had to reply to His searching questions, and deep insight into Scripture. Nor would the longing of the people at large, for the vengeance of God on the oppressors of the nation escape His notice. As a man in all things like other men, except in His sinlessness—the synagogue with its services, and the free expression of thought, both in public and private, which it favoured, must have been one of the chief agencies in developing His human nature.

CHAPER XIV.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES.

Among the influences amidst which the child Jesus grew up at Nazareth, the Synagogue, with its constantly recurring services, was, no doubt, one of the most important. It was a characteristic of Jewish life, however, that its religion was interwoven with the whole tissue of daily events, from the cradle to the grave.

The Jewish ecclesiastical calendar, with its cycle of feasts, half-feasts and fasts, must have had a great effect in colouring the general mind, and perpetuating the system and sentiments which they illustrated. There were four different reckonings of the Hebrew year—that which commenced with the first day of Nisan, and was known as "the year of kings and feasts;" a second, which dated from the first of Elul—that is, from the full moon of August—from which the year was calculated for the tithing of cattle; a third, from the first day of Tisri—that is, from the new moon of September—from which

the years from the creation of the world were reckoned; and a fourth, from the first day of the eleventh month, Schebet—from which the age of trees was counted, for the payment of tithes, and for noting the time when it became lawful to eat the fruit.

The stir made to catch the first glimpse of the new moon would be a great event each month, even in a retired place like Nazareth. Jesus would hear, how, on the last day of each month, men were posted on all the heights round Jerusalem to watch for it; how they hastened, at the utmost speed, to the Temple, with the news, even if it were Sabbath, and how the sacred trumpet sounded to announce it, and special sacrifices were offered. The appearance of the new moon had in all ages been a great day in Israel, as it also was among the Greeks and Romans. The Rabbis affirmed that God Himself had spoken of it to Moses, and told him how to observe it. All over the land it was celebrated, monthly, by special religious solemnities, and by universal rejoicing; in some months more than in others; every one in Jerusalem, who could, repairing to the Temple, and all, elsewhere, making it a point to attend the synagogue on that day. In the fondly remembered times of the past, the day of the new moon had been that on which, especially, the people flocked to the prophets to receive instruction, and on which their ancestors, at some periods, had been wont to worship, from their roofs, the returning light, as that of the Queen of Heaven.

Many things would impress this event on the Nazareth children. They doubtless noticed how all the men of the village watched from their doors, each month, for the new light, and they had often heard their fathers, with covered head, repeat the prayer still used by every pious Jew at first seeing it—"Blessed be Thou, Lord, our God! who, through Thy Word, didst create the heavens, and their whole host, by the breath of Thy mouth. He appointed them a law and time that they should not go back from their places. Joyfully and gladly they fulfil the will of their Creator, whose working and whose works are truth. He spoke to the moon, and commanded her that she should renew herself in glory and splendour, for those whom He has carried from their mother's breast, for they, too, will be one day renewed like her, and glorify their Creator after the honour of His kingdom. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who renewest the moons. Nor would the simple household feast that followed be unnoticed, with its invited guests, nor the Sabbath rest of all from their daily work, for it must have been a welcome monthly holiday to the school children of Nazareth.

The great festival of the Hebrew year—the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread—began on the 15th day of Nisan, the first month, and lasted till the 22nd. It was one of the three yearly feasts which every Israelite, if he could, attended in Jerusalem. Like circumcision, which, indeed, was hardly thought so sacred, its due observance was esteemed a vital necessity, on no account to be neg-

lected in any year. It was the annual sacrament of the whole Jewish race. The Passover lamb was the one offering which all presented spontaneously. It not only commemorated a national deliverance—the "passing over" of Israel by the destroying angel, but was believed to secure the same mercy for themselves hereafter. Every one regarded it as a debt he owed, and must by all means pay, if he would be counted worthy of a part in the congregation of Israel. It was, in fact, a household sacrifice, which each family offered on its own behalf, that its transgressions through the year might be "passed over." Even till the later ages of Jewish history the father of each household himself killed the male lamb or goat required, and sprinkled the blood on the lintel and doorposts, as an expiation for the family as a whole, and for any who might have joined them in keeping the feast.

Pious Israelites were careful to accustom their children, from the earliest years, to the requirements of their religion, and hence often brought them with them to Jerusalem at the great feasts. Indeed, even the liberal school of Hillel made it binding to do so as soon as a child was able, with the help of its father's hand, to climb the flight of steps into the Temple courts.

The Passover itself was eaten only by males, but the week of the feast was a time of universal rejoicing, so that husbands were wont to take their wives, as well as their sons, with them.

Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem, every year, to the Passover, and took Jesus with them, for the first time, when He was twelve years old. Like His cousin John, He had grown in mind and body, and showed a sweet religious spirit. The journey must have been the revelation of a new world to Him—a world, beyond the hills of Samaria, which had hitherto seemed the limit of the earth, as He looked away to them from the hill-top behind Nazareth.

Only a Jew could realize the feelings such a visit must have raised even in a child. Jerusalem, to the Israelite, was more, if possible, than Mecca is to the Mahommedan. The whole "land of Israel," was "holy," since it, only, could offer to God the first-fruits, or the first-born, or the "perpetual" shewbread. Its walled towns were still "holier." No leper was allowed in them, and a corpse carried out to burial could not be brought into a town again. But Jerusalem, the sacred city, the seat of the Temple, had a sanctity all its own. By Rabbinical laws, which, however, were, doubtless, often neglected, even holy offerings, of the lower kinds, and second tithes, might be eaten in it. The dead must be carried out before sunset of the day of death. No houses could be let for lodgings, and no sepulchres, except those of the house of David, and of Huldah, the prophetess, had been tolerated. No impurity was suffered, lest creeping things should defile the holy city; nor could scaffolds be set up against the walls, for a similar fear of defilement. Smoke from household fires was forbidden; poultry were unlawful, because they scratched

up the soil, and might defile passing offerings; no leper could enter the gates; gardens were prohibited, because the decaying leaves and the manure would make an offensive smell. Superstition had invented the most amazing fancies, as proofs of the passing holiness of the city in its whole extent, and these were, doubtless, universally and implicitly believed. It was maintained that no serpent or scorpion ever harmed any one in Jerusalem; that no fly was ever seen in the place for slaughtering the sacrifices; that no rain ever put out the fire of the altar, and that no wind ever blew aside the pillar of smoke over the altar. But the hospitality of the holy city was less open to question; for it was a common boast that no one had ever failed to find friendly entertainment, or a hearth on which to roast his passover. However churlish to all besides, the hospitality of the citizens to their own nation was unbounded.

But if the city were holy, it was mainly so because of the far greater holiness of the sanctuary within its bounds. The Temple mountain held the fourth place in local holiness. The ceremonially unclean could not enter it. The space between the court of the heathen and the inner courts—the Zwinger, or Chel—ranked next; none but Israelites could enter it, and not even they, if defiled by a dead body. The women's court came next. No unclean person, even after bathing, could enter it till sunset. The Forecourt of the Israelites was still holier. No one could go into it who needed expiation to be made for him. Even the clean must bathe before entering, and any unclean person intruding, through oversight, must atone for his error by a trespass-offering. The Forecourt of the Priests was yet more sacred. None but the priests or Levites could cross its threshold, except on special occasions, specified by the Law. The space between the altar and the Temple had a still greater sanctity, for, into it, no priest with any bodily defect, or with his hair in disorder, or with a torn robe, or who had tasted wine, could enter. The Temple itself stood apart, in the tenth and highest degree of sanctity. Before entering it, every priest had to wash both hands and feet. In this revered centre, however, there was one spot more awful than all the rest—the Holy of Holies, which the high priest alone could enter, and he only once a year, on the great Day of Atonement, in the performance of the rites of the day, which required his entering it four times.

Such a country and city could not fail to be the objects of abiding and passionate sentiment. Affection for their native land led to the unique historical phenomenon of the return of the exiles from Babylon. Many psalms of the period still record how the captives wept by the rivers of Babylon when they remembered Zion, and hung their harps on the willows of their banks; and the same intense longing for Palestine is illustrated even yet, by the fond fancy of the Targum that the bodies of the righteous Jews who die in foreign lands, make their way, under ground, to the Mount of Olives, to share in the resurrection of the just, of which it is to be the scene. The wailing of

the Jews of Jerusalem over their ruined Temple, as they lean against the few stones of it which yet remain, shows the same feeling, and it is shared by all the race so strongly, that some earth from the land of their fathers is sprinkled on the grave of every Jew that dies away from it, to make him rest in peace.

Love of their mother-land, however, was not especially that which linked the Jews of all countries in Christ's day into a great brotherhood, and attracted them continually to Jerusalem, for they were voluntarily settled, far and wide, in foreign lands. Nor was it their longing for freedom and independence, for they were contented subjects of all forms of government. Their eyes were everywhere turned to the Temple, and they found in it the centre of their national unity. Their heavenly and earthly fatherland seemed to meet in its sacred enclosure. From all the earth, wherever a Jew lived, rose the same cry as that of the exiles at the sources of the Jordan. "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? I pour out my soul in me when I remember these things—how I went with the pilgrim bands, and marched up with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise; with the festive crowd!" To the Jews of every land it was the crown and glory of their religious system. In their scattered synagogues and houses of prayer they looked towards it at every service. Their gifts and offerings flowed to it in a golden stream, partly to satisfy the requirements of the Law, but even more to gratify their religious devotion. Every Jew over twenty throughout the world gave his didrachma yearly—in payment of the first-fruits required by the Law—to maintain the Temple and its sacrifices. Constant voluntary gifts, besides, often of great value, streamed into the holy treasury. Tithes, also, were claimed by the Rabbis from all Jews abroad as well as at home, and were doubtless given by the devout. "In almost every town," says Philo, "there is a chest for the sacred money, and into this the dues are put. At fixed times it is entrusted to the foremost men to carry it to Jerusalem. The noblest are chosen from every town to take up the Hope of all Jews, untouched, for on this payment of legal dues rests the hope of the devout." Egypt, though it had a Temple of its own at Leontopolis, sent this yearly tribute regularly; it came constantly from Rome and all the West; from Lesser Asia and all Syria. But it flowed in the richest stream from Babylonia and the countries beyond the Euphrates, from which it was brought up under the protection of thousands, who volunteered to escort it to Jerusalem, and protect it from plunder by the Parthians on the way.

Thus Jerusalem and the Temple were the grand religious centre of all Israel, to the remotest limits of its wanderings. The Sanctuary lived in every heart. To maintain it inviolate was the one common anxiety. Foreign rulers might hold sway over Palestine, and even over Jerusalem, and so long as the Temple was left untouched, sub-

mission was paid them, as the will of fate. If, however, the haughtiness or greed of the enemy violated, or even only threatened, the Sanctuary, there ran through the whole Jewish world a feeling of indignation that roused them at once, and at the cry that the Temple was in danger, weapons were grasped and solemn prayers rose, and one deep resolve pervaded all—to shed the last drop of their blood on the battle-field or at the Altar, for Jerusalem and the Sanctuary.

It must have been a wonderful sight to the child Jesus to visit the Holy City at the season of the Passover. The multitudes who flocked to the feast from all countries were countless. "Many thousands," says Philo, "from many thousand towns and cities, make a pilgrimage to the Temple at every feast; some by land, others by sea, from the east and the west, the north and the south. Even at Pentecost, which attracted a much smaller number, vast crowds of Jews and proselytes were present from every part of the Roman empire, which was nearly equivalent to the then known world. Josephus reckoned the numbers attending a single Passover at 2,700,000, inclusive of the population of the city. Every house in the narrow limits of Jerusalem was crowded with pilgrims, and the whole landscape round covered with the tents or booths, of mat, and wickerwork, and interwoven leaves, extemporized to serve as shelter—like the similar structures of the Easter pilgrims still—for those who could not be accommodated in any house. The routes by which they travelled to the Holy City from all lands must have been like those to Mecca, at certain seasons, even now: countless vessels laden with living freights of pilgrims: all the main lines of road thronged with huge caravans: every port of the Mediterranean, and every city and town on the highways leading to the great centre, thronged as with the passage of armies. The vast "dispersion"—Jewish by birth, sentiment, or adoption—converged more and more densely on the one point,—Jerusalem. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and Mesopotamians, in the costume of the far East, with their long trains of camels and mules; crowds from every province of Lesser Asia—Cappadocia, Pontus, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, each band with the distinctive characteristics of its own district; swarthy multitudes, in long caravans, or afoot,—after a sea voyage to Joppa or Cæsarea—from Egypt, the headquarters of the foreign Jews, and from Libya and Cyrene; pilgrims even from imperial Rome; men from the slopes of Cretan Ida, and from the far-off cities and towns of sandy Arabia, met under the shadow of the Temple. The whole world, in a sense, was gathered to one spot, and this, itself, to a mind such as that of the boy Jesus, must have been rich in the most varied influence and knowledge.

The appearance of the city would make an impression never to be forgotten. If there were no gardens in Jerusalem, there was a girdle of them reaching, from its very walls, down the valleys, and up the opposite hill-sides; one of them so famous that the figs from it were sold for three or four assarii each. The garden walls and ditches

netted over all the approaches to the city, on each side. On the hills around rose the mansions of the rich citizens, and at the bend where the valleys of Kidron and Hinnom met, beside the Pool of Siloam, the eye regaled itself with the wide and rich verdure of the royal gardens.

As Joseph, and Mary with her Son, came in sight of the city from the north, they would be on ground as high as Mount Zion: and rising, to the north-west of the city, even a few feet higher, while, on the west, Zion rose, on an average, about 100 feet above the hills across the valley of Hinnom; and, on the east, the Mount of Olives overtopped the highest part of the city by 100 feet, and the Temple hill by no less than 300. Except on the north, however, the high ground was divided from Jerusalem by deep valleys, which could be reached from within the city only by steep streets and roads. The pilgrims encamped in the valleys of Kidron or Hinnom saw the buildings and towers of Mount Zion more than 500 feet above them; and those whose tents were pitched not far from the same place, at Joab's Well, were nearly 600 feet below the houses of the upper city. The court of the Priests looked over to the Pool of Siloam, 370 feet below; and from Mount Zion it needed a descent of 264 feet to reach the Garden of Gethsemane, in the Valley of the Kidron.

Jerusalem was thus, pre-eminently, a mountain city, surrounded on all sides by hills, and with hills, famous and sacred beyond all others, as its own site. The road from Nazareth entered the new lower town, by the Damascus gate, and passed through the most stirring business street—in the bottom of the Valley of the Cheesemakers, or the Tyropœon: a deep and narrow hollow between Mounts Zion and Moriah, then crowded with the narrow lanes which serve for streets in Eastern cities. In the new town, under the shadow of the two hills, were the shops of the braziers; the clothes' bazaar, and the square where the authorities received announcements of the new moon, and gave the public feasts that followed, monthly. In the Tyropœon, the streets ran, in terraces, up the steep sides of the hill, side lanes climbing here and there, to the top, past the bazaar of the butchers, and that of the wool-dealers, to the upper street, where Ismael Ben Camithi, the high priest at the time, having gone out on the great Day of Atonement, to speak with a heathen, a fleck of spittle fell on his clothes, from the lips of the uncircumcised, and defiled him, so that he could not perform the services of the day, and had to get his brother to take his place.

On the west of the Tyropœon, on the top of Mount Zion, rose the old, or upper city, known also as the City of David. In it were the shops of the goldsmiths, and the houses of the priests who lived in Jerusalem. The Wall of David ran along its north side, opening through the gate Genuath, to Akra, or the lower town. High above this wall, which was over fifty feet in height, rose the three famous castles—Hippikus, Phasaelus, and Marianne—built by Herod the

Great, and then fresh from the builder's hands. Of these, Hippikus, stern and massive, towered 120 feet above the wall, at its north-west corner: a great square of huge stones, in successive stories, the upper one surmounted by battlements and turrets. Close by, and in a line with it, rose Phasaelus, the splendid memorial to Herod's brother Phasael, who had beaten out his brains against the walls of his dungeon when a prisoner of the Parthians. It, also, was square, for sixty feet of its height above the wall, but from amidst the breast-works and bulwarks of this lower fortress, rose a second tower about seventy feet higher, with magnificent battlements and turrets. Within, this upper tower was like a palace, and it was, doubtless, intended as a refuge for the king, in case of necessity. Mariamne, the smallest of the three castles, was about thirty feet square, and about seventy-five in height, but its upper half was more highly finished than that of either of the others, as if to quiet its builder's conscience for the murder of her whose name it bore. All three fortresses, towering thus grandly aloft, above the high wall,—which itself rose along the crest of a high hill,—were of white marble: each stone thirty feet long, fifteen in breadth, and from seven to eight in thickness; and all squared so exactly that their joinings could hardly be seen. "Each tower," to use the words of Josephus, "looked like a great natural rock which had been cut by the workman into shape, like the rock-hewn buildings of Edom."

Under the protection of these splendid structures rose the new palace of Herod, about the centre of the northern half of Mount Zion, a great part of which was enclosed within its park walls, themselves a second line of defence, forty-five feet in height, with strong towers rising, at equal distances, from their broad tops. The palace itself was indescribably magnificent. Spacious rooms, with elaborately carved walls and ceilings, many of them crusted with precious stones, displayed Oriental splendour to hundreds of guests at a time. Gold and silver shone on every side. Round this sumptuous abode, porticoes with curious pillars of costly stone, offered shady retreats. Groves and gardens stretched on every side, intermingled with pools and artificial rivers, bordered by long, delightful walks, frequented, through the day, by all who could endure the desecration of Jerusalem by the countless statues which adorned them.

The theatre built by Herod, to the horror of the nation, was also, apparently, in this part of the city; and outside, at a little distance, was the amphitheatre, an object of still greater popular aversion, from its gladiatorial shows, in which men condemned to death fought with wild beasts. Inscriptions in honour of Augustus, and trophies of the nations Herod had conquered in his wars, adorned the exterior of the theatre; and the games in the circus, though shunned by the Jews, were celebrated with the greatest pomp, strangers from all the neighbouring countries being invited to them. The trophies round the theatre especially excited indignation, being supposed to cover

images, and hence being looked upon as heathen idols. So great, indeed, had the excitement become, in Herod's lifetime, that, for policy, he had caused the armour to be taken from some of them, in presence of the leading men, to show that there was nothing but shapeless wood beneath. Yet even this did not calm the people, and no Jew passed the hated building without the bitterest feelings at its presence in the holy city.

On the eastern crest of Zion stood the old palace of the Asmonean kings, and, north of it, an open space surrounded by a lofty covered colonnade, known as the Xystus. A bridge spanned the Tyropœon Valley to the south-west corner of the Temple enclosure, and near the Xystus rose a hall, known as the Hall of the King's Council. The main streets ran north and south—some along the brow of the hill, others lower down, but parallel, following the course of the valley, with side lanes or narrow streets connecting them. They had raised pavements, either because of the slope of the ground, or to allow passers-by to avoid contact with persons or things ceremonially unclean. The upper city was mainly devoted to dwelling-houses of the better kind; but in the lower city, bazaars, or street-like markets were then, as now, a prominent feature, each devoted to a special branch of commerce.

Looking out at the Gennath gate on the north of Zion, the Almond pool, near at hand, refreshed the eye. Beyond it, across a little valley, slightly to the north-west, near the Joppa road, was Psephinos, another of the castles by which the city was at once defended and overawed. It rose in an octagon, high into the clear blue, showing from its battlements the whole sweep of the country, from the sea-coast to beyond the Dead Sea, and from the far north, away towards Edom, on the south. In Christ's day it stood outside the city, by itself, but soon after His death it was included in the line of wall built by Herod Agrippa.

The northern part of the lower town, known as Akra, was mainly interesting for the bustle of restless city life of every colour which it presented. The wood bazaar, the city council-house, and public records office, were in it. Nor was it destitute of attractions, for the double pool of Bethesda lay at its north-east corner. The Temple and its courts occupied nearly the whole of Mount Moriah, the second hill on which the city was built, the only other building on it contrasting strangely in appearance and character. It was the great fortress Antonia, at the north-west corner, on an isolated rock, separated by a cleft from Mount Moriah, and cased with stone where exposed, so that no foe could scale it. The castle occupied, with its enclosures, nearly a third of the great Temple plateau, and was built originally by John Hyrcanus, but had been rebuilt by Herod with great magnificence, with baths, fountains, galleries, piazza, and great rooms, to fit it for a residence for princely guests. It served now as the quarters of the Roman garrison, sent from Cæsarea at the time of

the great feasts, to keep peace in the city. In Christ's day the robes of the high priest were kept in it by the Romans, to prevent a seditious use of them. Covered ways led from the castle to the Temple area, to allow the soldiery free access in case of tumult or disturbance.

Such was the city to which Jesus now came for the first time. As He was led through its crowded streets, and saw its famous palaces, and towers, and marts, and above all, the Temple, what strange thoughts must have risen in the opening mind of the wondrous boy.

The panorama spread before Him from the city, at its different points, was no less filled with interest. From the Temple He looked eastward to Mount Olivet, then crowned by two great cedars, underneath which were booths for the sale of all things needed for ceremonial purifications, including the doves for the various offerings. He would no doubt hear how, in former times, beacon fires had been kindled on the hill-top at each new moon, and how mountain after mountain, catching the sight, spread the news in an hour over the whole land. Some one would, doubtless, also, tell Him that it was the hated Samaritans who had brought the custom to an end, by holding up lights at wrong times, and thus misleading Israel.

The Valley of the Kidron, below, would be equally interesting. It was to it the pilgrims came down at the Feast of Tabernacles, to cut the long boughs of willow which they carried in procession to the Temple, and laid bending over the altar. On the eve of the first day of the feast, Jesus would see men sent by the Temple authorities—a great crowd following—to cut the sheaf of first-fruits. Perhaps He saw the three reapers, with basket and sickle, step to spots previously marked out, asking, as they stood beside the new barley, "Has the sun set yet? Is this the right sickle? Is this the right basket?" and, if it were Sabbath, "Is this the Sabbath?"—to be followed by another question, thrice repeated, "Shall I cut?" which was answered with what seems, now, childish formality, but then thrilled all hearts, "Cut." Religious bitterness lay behind all this minute triviality, for did not the hated aristocratic Sadducees maintain that the first sheaf should be cut only on the first week-day of the feast, which would have affected the date of Pentecost, fifty days later? The Child from Nazareth would follow, when the sheaf, thus reaped, was carried, amidst great rejoicings, to the forecourt of the Temple, and presented by the priest as a heave-offering, then threshed, winnowed, and cleansed, dried over a sacred fire, and forthwith ground into flour, the finest of which was the new-harvest "meat-offering" before God. He knew that till this had been presented at the altar, no field could be cut, except to get fodder for cattle, or for other necessary ends.

Looking into the Valley of Hinnom from the southern end of the Temple, with its magnificent Royal porch, His eyes must have turned from the sight one spot in it offered, the fires kept up, night and day, to burn all the garbage and offal of the temple, and the refuse of the

city—the symbol of the unquenchable flames of the Pit. It was in this valley that children had been burned alive to Moloch in the old idolatrous times, and the remembrance of this, with the foulness of the part where the perpetual fires now burned, had made Gehenna—the name of the valley—the word used afterwards even by Jesus Himself, for the place of the lost.

Between Hinnom and Kidron, where the two valleys met at the south-east of the city, His eyes, looking down from the Temple Mount, would rest on the contrasted sweetness of the softly-flowing waters of Siloam, which bubbled up noiselessly at the foot of the hill, and after filling a double pool, glided on to the south, till they lost themselves in the king's gardens.

City and people: the past and the present, must have filled the whole being of the Child with awe and wonder, for He now stood, for the first time, under the shadow of His Father's Temple, and the murmur of countless languages that filled the air, was, in very truth, homage to that Father from all the world.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PASSOVER VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

THE vast multitudes coming to the Passover arranged to reach Jerusalem, at the latest, on the 14th of Nisan, the day on the evening of which the feast was celebrated. In the city, however, there had been a great stir for some days already, in anticipation of the solemnity. So far back as from the 15th of the preceding month, all the bridges and roads, far and near, had been begun to be repaired. All graves near the lines of travel, or round Jerusalem, had been either fenced in, or the head-stones had been whitewashed, that they might be seen from a distance, and thus warn off the pilgrims, whom they might otherwise have defiled, and made unfit for the feast. The fields, throughout the whole country, had been anxiously gone over, to see if they were unclean by any plants growing together in them, which the Law forbade being allowed to do so. On the Sabbath immediately preceding the 14th—the Great Sabbath—special services had been held in all the synagogues and in the Temple itself, and the Rabbis had discoursed to the people on the laws and meaning of the festival. The lambs, or he goats, had been selected, in earlier times, on the 10th, from the vast flocks driven to the city at this season, to supply the Passover demand. But this was impossible now, as the pilgrims arrived, mostly, after that day. Only male lambs, or he goats, of a year old, and without blemish, could be used, and they were selected with the most scrupulous care by the head of each company of relatives or neighbours, who proposed to eat the feast together.

The fourteenth day, which began at sunset of the 13th, was also the

first day of the feast of "Unleavened Bread," and was hence known as the "preparation day." No particle of leaven could be left in any house. The head of each family, as the evening closed, began the household purification with the prayer—"Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us with Thy commandments, and requirest us to remove the leaven," and then proceeded, in rigorous silence, to search every room, gathering every crumb that could be found, and finally tying all up till the following morning. A further search, which must end before noon, was then made for any liquid or solid product of fermented grain, and for all dishes or vessels that had held it. All were taken out of the house, and the crumbs and dough carefully burned, with a repetition of prescribed prayers. The house itself was then cleansed in every part, and no one could enter the unpurified house of a heathen, henceforth, during the feast, without being defiled. Nothing leavened could be eaten or permitted in the house during the next seven days,—for defilement, bringing with it unfitness to eat the Passover, would follow in either case.

This purification of the house, however, was by no means all. Vessels of any kind, to be used at the feast, were cleansed with prescribed rites, in a settled mode. Metal dishes, &c., after being scoured, must be first dipped in boiling water—in a pot used for no other purpose—and then into cold. Iron vessels must be made red-hot; then washed in the same way. Iron mortars, for crushing grain for baking, were filled with red coals, till a thread, tied outside, was burned through. Wooden vessels, after being wetted, were rubbed with a red-hot stone. No clay dish could be used at all if not quite new, and it had to be first dipped thrice in running water, and consecrated by a special prayer. Personal purity was as strictly enforced. Every one had to cut his hair and nails, and to take a bath.

The baking of the unleavened bread was accompanied with equally formal care. On the evening of the 13th, "before the stars appeared," the head of each household went out and drew water for the purpose, uttering the words as he did so, "This is the water for the unleavened bread," and covering the vessel that contained it, for fear of any defilement. In grinding the flour, the most anxious care was observed to keep all leaven from coming near the woman at the mill, and to take no grain that was at all damp, lest it might have begun to ferment. After baking, one loaf, to be taken to the priest at the Temple, was laid aside, with another prescribed prayer.

The afternoon of the 14th was a time of the intensest bustle, for the ram's horn trumpets would presently announce, from the Temple, the beginning of the feast. At the sound, every one took his lamb to the Temple, the court walls of which were gaily hung with many-coloured carpets and tapestries, in honour of the day. The countless victims must be first examined by the priests, to see if they were without blemish, then slaughtered and prepared for roasting, in the forecourts

of the Temple, by the heads of the different households, or by men deputed by them, or by the Levites in attendance, with indescribable haste and confusion, for there was more than work enough for all, to kill, almost at the same time, the 256,000 lambs sometimes required. The exact time for killing the victims was "between the evenings," from sunset of the 14th till the stars appeared, though they might be killed in the three last hours of the day.

As soon as the courts were full, the gates were shut on the multitude within, each holding his lamb. Three blasts of trumpets then announced the beginning of the heavy task. Long rows of priests, with gold and silver bowls, stood ranged between the altar and the victims, to catch the blood, and pass it on from one to the other, till the last poured it on the altar, from which it ran off, through pipes beneath. When the lamb had been drained of blood, the head of the family to which it belonged took it to the hooks on the walls and pillars round, where it was opened and skinned. The tail, which, in the sheep of Palestine, often weighs many pounds, and the fat, were handed to the nearest priest, and passed on till they reached the altar, to be burned as an offering to God. The lamb was killed without the usual laying of the hands on its head. It was now ready to be carried away, and was borne off by the family head in its skin, which was afterwards to be given to the host in whose house the feast might be held.

Not fewer than ten, but as many as twenty, might sit down at a company. Women were allowed to join their households, though it was not required that they should eat the Passover; and lads from fourteen, and even slaves and foreigners, if circumcised, sat down with the rest. Everything was hurried, for the lambs were required to be killed, roasted, and eaten, between three in the afternoon and nine or twelve at night. They were, properly, to be eaten in the courts of the Temple, but this, after a time, having become impossible, they might be eaten anywhere within the Rabbinical limits of the city. Thousands of fires, in special ovens, prepared them; for they must be roasted only, not boiled, or cooked except in this way. It was trussed with spits of pomegranate wood, inserted in the form of a cross, and the whole creature roasted entire. None of the flesh was allowed to remain till morning, any fragments left being forthwith burned, that they might not be defiled. The very dress and attitude of all who took part had been originally prescribed, but these details were now out of use.

The feast itself must have impressed a child like Jesus no less than the preparations. Not a bone of the lamb must be broken, under a penalty of forty stripes, nor must any part of it touch the oven; and if any fat dropped back on it, the part on which it dropped was cut off. The company having assembled, after the lamps were lighted, arranged themselves in due order, on couches, round the tables, reclining on their left side. A cup of red wine, mixed with water, was filled for every one, and drunk, after a touching benediction, by the

head man of the group. A basin of water and a towel were then brought in, that each might wash his hands, and then another blessing was pronounced.

A table was then carried into the open space between the couches, and bitter herbs, and unleavened bread, with a dish—made of dates, raisins, and other fruits, mixed with vinegar to the consistency of lime, in commemoration of the mortar with which their fathers worked in Egypt,—set on it, along with the paschal lamb. The head man then took some of the bitter herbs, dipped them in the dish, and, after giving thanks to God for creating the fruits of the earth, ate a small piece, and gave one to each of the company. A second cup of wine and water was then poured out, and the son of the house, or the youngest boy present, asked the meaning of the feast. The questions to be put had been minutely fixed by the Rabbis, and were as formally and minutely answered in appointed words, the whole story of the deliverance from Egypt being thus repeated, year after year, at every Passover table, in the very same terms, throughout all Israel.

The first part of the great Hallelujah—Psalms cxiii. and cxiv.—was now chanted, and was followed by a prayer, beginning, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast redeemed us and our forefathers from Egypt." A third cup was now poured out, and then came the grace after meals. A fourth and last cup followed, and then Psalms cxv., cxvi., cxvii., and cxviii., which formed the rest of the Hallelujah, and another prayer, closed the feast.

At midnight the gates of the Temple were once more opened, and the people, who seldom slept that night, poured through them, in their holiday dress, with thank-offerings, in obedience to the command that none should appear before the Lord empty. Of these gifts the priests took their rightful share, and gave back the rest to the officers, who had it cooked for them in the Court of the Women, and sat down to a second feast in the Temple cloisters, or in some part of the town, within the limits of which alone it was lawful to eat such food.

The whole week was full of interest. The 15th was kept like a Sabbath. It was one of the six days of the year on which the Law prohibited all servile work. Only what was necessary for daily life might be done. It was a day for rest, and for the presentation of freewill offerings in the Temple.

It was on the third day that the first-fruits of the harvest were brought from the Kidron valley to the Temple, to be waved before God in solemn acknowledgment of His bounty in giving the kindly fruits of the earth. This incident Jesus, doubtless, saw. He would notice, besides, how the sheaf had no sooner been offered than the streets were filled with sellers of bread made of new barley, parched ears of the young crop, and early growths and fruits of all kinds, which had been kept back till then.

From the 17th to the 20th the days were only half holy, and many

of the people had already begun to leave Jerusalem. Crowds still remained, however, to enjoy the great holiday time of the year, and the days and even the nights, with their bright moon, went merrily by.

The last day, the 21st, like the first, was kept as a Sabbath. Only necessary work was permitted, and it closed with a rehearsal of the Passover supper, for the sake of those who could not come up on the first great day of the feast.

But amidst all the sights and wonders of the week one specially interested Jesus. His heart was already set supremely on "His Father's house," the Temple. Can we doubt that, with the early habits of the East, He found time to watch its daily service throughout?

This began, in reality, the night before. The priests required for the services of the next day, or to watch through the night, assembled in the evening in the great Fire Chamber. The keys of the Temple, and of the inner forecourts, were then handed them by their brethren whom they relieved, and hidden below the marble floor. The Levites on watch through the night, or to serve next day, also received the keys of the outer forecourts from their brethren whose duties were over. Besides these, twenty-four representatives of the people, on duty,—men delegated by the nation to represent it,—at the daily sacrifices, were also present.

As the morning service began very early, everything was put in train beforehand. Ninety-three vessels and instruments needed for it were received from the retiring Levites, and carried to a silver table on the south of the Great Altar, to be ready. The gates of the Temple building itself, and of the inner forecourts, were locked up for the night, the key once more put in its place, the priest who had charge of it kissing the marble slab as he replaced it, and lying down to sleep over it through the night. The gates of the outer forecourts were now also shut, and the watches of priests and Levites set for the night. But the Temple was too sacred to be entrusted to them alone; the Representatives slept in it on behalf of the people; and some ecclesiastical dignitaries, deputed by the authorities, and one of the higher priests, who was to preside over the lots for daily offices next morning.

Towards dawn, the captain of the watch and some priests rose, took the keys, and passing into the inner forecourt, preceded by torch-bearers, divided into two bands, which went round the Temple courts, to see that all was safe, and every vessel in its right place.

Meanwhile, the other priests had risen, bathed, and put on their white robes. The duties of each for the day were fixed by lot each morning, to prevent the unseemly quarrels, resulting even in bloodshed, which had formerly risen. Assembling in a special chamber, all stood in a circle, and the lot was taken by counting a given number from any part of the ring, the choice remaining with him whose place made up the figure. Meanwhile, the Levites and Representa-

tives waited the summons to gather. The priests for the day now once more washed their hands and feet in a brazen laver, which, itself, had been kept all night in water, for fear of its being defiled. The feet were left bare while the priests were on duty.

All the gates were presently opened by the Levites, and the priests blew thrice on their trumpets to announce to the whole city that the worship of the day would soon begin. The Great Altar was forthwith cleansed by priests to whose lot this duty had fallen. The singers and musicians of the day, and the priests to blow the trumpets at the morning sacrifice, were set apart; the instruments brought; the night-watchers dismissed, and then the day's service had begun. All this took place by torchlight, before dawn.

The morning sacrifice could not be slain before the distinct appearance of the morning light. A watcher, therefore, standing on the roof of the Temple, looked out for the first glimpse of Hebron, far off, on the hills, as the sign of morning having come. When it was visible, the summons was given—"Priests, to your ministry! Levites, to your places! Israelites, take your stations!" The priests then once more washed their feet and hands, and the service finally began.

Entering first the Temple, and then the Holy Place, with lowly reverence, a priest now, after prayer, cleansed the altar of incense, gathered the ashes in his hands, and went out slowly, backwards. Another, meanwhile, had laid wood on the Great Altar, and a third brought a year-old lamb, selected four days before, from the pen in the Temple, to the north side of the altar. The Representatives having laid their hands on its head, it was slaughtered with the head to the west side of the Temple, and the blood caught in a bowl, and stirred continually to prevent its curdling and becoming unfit for sprinkling.

The incense offering was now kindled. At the tinkling of a bell, the people in the inner forecourt began to pray, and the priests whose lot it was entered the Holy Place. The first brought out the censer last used, praying and walking backward as he retired. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the four sides of the Great Altar as soon as he reappeared.

A second priest having now extinguished five of the seven lamps of the golden candlestick in the Holy Place, a third took in a glowing censer and laid it on the altar, prayed, and retired backwards. A fourth now went in, handed the censer to an assistant who followed, shook incense on the coals, prayed, and retired. The two remaining lights were then extinguished, and the offering ended.

The skin was now stripped from the slain lamb, the bowels taken out and washed, the body cut in pieces, laid on a marble table, and salted. The food or meat-offering of meal, mixed with oil, and strewed with incense, was then prepared, and a fixed measure of wine poured into a costly cup for the drink-offering. It was now sunrise.

As the sun rose, the nine pieces of the sacrifice were lifted by nine priests, and carried to the Great Altar, in order—laid on it and consumed—the other priests and the people repeating morning prayer. The meat-offering was then laid on the altar, salt and incense added, and then a handful of it was thrown on the altar fire, the rest falling to the priest as his perquisite. Twelve cakes, the bread-offering of the high priest, were next burned, after being strewn with salt. Every detail had occupied a separate priest, and now another poured the wine of the drink-offering into a silver funnel in the altar, through which it ran into a conduit underneath.

The morning sacrifice was now over. Forthwith two priests sounded their trumpets nine times, and twelve Levites, standing on a raised platform in the Court of the Priests, recited the psalms of the day to the music of their instruments, and then came the ancient priestly benediction—"The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and grant thee peace."

Voluntary offerings, and those required on special grounds, occupied the priests, for a time, after the morning sacrifice. At three in the afternoon the evening sacrifice and incense offering presented the same details, the victim being left on the altar to burn away through the night. At sunset the S'chma was read again, and the evening prayer offered; the seven lamps in the Holy Place again kindled and left to burn till morning, and all the vessels cleaned by the Levites, and made ready for next day.

This daily service was no doubt watched by the child Jesus, who now, for the first time, saw the priests in His Father's house at their ministrations. But the city itself would be sure to arrest His notice.

At early dawn He would hear the trumpets of the Roman garrison in Antonia, and see the booths open shortly after, on the Mount of Olives. Three trumpet blasts from the Temple had already waked the slumbering citizens and pilgrims, and the first beams of the sun had announced the hour of morning prayer. The streets had already filled in the twilight, for the Oriental, in all ages, has been an early riser. Sheep and cattle dealers, and money-changers, were hurrying to the Court of the Heathen. Worshippers were thronging across the Xystus bridge from the Upper City to the Temple, and through the Market gate, from the Lower Town, along all the streets. The countless synagogues were open for morning service. Men wearing the Greek dress, and speaking Greek, had gathered in some, and other nationalities in others.

With the first sight of the risen sun every one bowed his head in prayer, wherever at the moment he might be. Yonder a Pharisee, who has purposely let the hour overtake him, in the street, suddenly stops, and ties his Tephillin, broader and larger than common, on his forehead and arm. The olive gatherer, with his basket, prays where he is, in the tree. Pilgrims and citizens are alike bent in prayer.

It was an uneasy time when Jesus first visited Jerusalem. Archelaus had been banished two years before, and the hateful race of the Edomites no longer reigned in the palace on Zion, but the hopes built on the change to direct government by a Roman Procurator had not been fulfilled. Judea was now only a part of a Roman province, and the first act of the direct imperial rule had been to make a census of the whole country for heathen taxes. Galilee and Judea, alike, had been in wild insurrection, which had been quenched in blood. Men spoke with bated breath, but were at one in deadly hatred of the foreigner, and in the yearning hope that the Messiah might soon appear to drive him out.

The great bazaar in the Lower New Town was early full of bustle. It was a long street, crowded with stalls, booths, and shops. Fine bread of the wheat of Ephraim was sold after the second day of the feast. Cakes of figs and raisins; fish of different kinds from the Sea of Tiberias; wood-work of all kinds, filled the open stalls. Dibs —the syrup of grapes—had many sellers, and there were booths for Egyptian lentiles, and even for cinnamon and pepper. Mechanics plied their trades in the streets, too busy to rise even when a great Rabbi passed. In the side streets trades of every kind filled the roadway. Potters were busy in their sheds; fruiterers offered choice Jerusalem figs from gardens made rich with the blood of the sacrifices; flax-beaters pounded their flax in the streets. The numbers of passing priests showed that Jerusalem was the Holy City. Levites, with their peculiar head-dress, and an outside pocket containing a small roll of the Law; Pharisees, with broad phylacteries and great fringes; Essenes in white, with the air of old prophets; gorgeous officials of the governor's court, at present in the city—pilgrims in the costume of every land, and speaking a babel of languages—passed and repassed in endless variety.

The people of Jerusalem might well value the feasts, for they lived by the vast numbers of pilgrims. The money spent by individuals, though little compared to the wealth which flowed yearly into the Temple treasury, from the whole Dispersion, was great in the aggregate. Their gifts in money to the Temple might in part remain there; but they needed doves, lambs, and oxen for sacrifices, wood for the altar, and liked to carry home memorials of Jerusalem. The countless priests and Levites, and officials connected with the Temple, caused a great circulation of money, and the building itself, and the requirements of its worship, involved constant expenditure. We need not, therefore, wonder that Jerusalem was wildly fanatical in its zeal for the Holy Place. It was bound to it not less by self-interest than by religious bigotry.

Jerusalem, though by no means large, was the headquarters of the great religious institutions, as the capital of the theocracy. Countless scribes, rulers, presbyters, scholars, readers, and servants were connected with its schools and synagogues. It was the seat of all

the famous teachers of the Law, the focus of controversy, the university town of the Rabbis, the battle-ground of religious parties,—the capital of the Jewish nation, in short, in a measure only possible from its having in its midst the one Temple of the race. It was the Delphi and Olympia of Israel, and how much more! Such a city, at such a time, must have made lasting impressions on the boy Jesus. But His heart was set supremely on higher things than the merely outward and earthly. From His earliest years His mother's faith in the mysterious words spoken by saints and angels respecting Him, even before His birth, must have shown itself in a thousand ways in her intercourse with Him, and have kindled mysterious thoughts in His boyish mind. We cannot conceive the relations of His divine nature to the human, but it must be safe to follow the Gospels in their picture of Him as maturing year by year, from the simplicity of the child to the wisdom and strength of riper years.

Physical and intellectual ripeness come early in the East. David, Herod, Hyrcanus, and Josephus showed, even in boyhood, traits which in more backward climates mark much later years. Josephus tells us that numbers of Jewish boys put to torture in Egypt, under Vespasian, after the fall of Masada, bore unflinchingly the utmost that could be inflicted on them, rather than own Cæsar as their lord, and even in our own day children in Palestine are so early matured that marriages of boys of thirteen and girls of eleven are not unknown. Philo, in Christ's day, notes different ages strangely enough to our ideas. "At seven," he says, "a man is a logician and grammarian; at fourteen mature, because able to be the father of a being like himself; while, at twenty-one, growth and bloom are over." "A son of five years," says Juda Ben Tema, "is to read the Scriptures aloud (that is, in school), one of ten to give himself to the Mischna, of thirteen to the Commandments, of fifteen to the Talmud, of eighteen to marriage."

The Rabbis, perhaps from the tradition that Moses left his father's house when twelve years old, that Samuel had begun to prophesy when he had finished his twelfth year, and that Solomon had delivered some of his famous judgments when as young, had already in Christ's day fixed that age as the close of boyhood and the opening of a manlier life. "After the completion of the twelfth year," says the Talmud, "a boy is to be considered a youth, and is to keep the fast on the Day of Atonement. Till he is thirteen his religious duties are to be performed for him by his father, but on his thirteenth birthday the parent is no longer answerable for his son's sins."

Jesus, who had ended His twelfth year when taken up to the Passover, was thus already a "Son of the Law," and, as such, required to perform all religious duties. The Tephillin or phylacteries had, doubtless, as was usual, been put on Him publicly in the synagogue of Nazareth, to mark the transition from boyhood, to remind Him that He was henceforth to wear them, to keep the fasts, to follow the

laws of the Rabbis, and to think seriously of His future calling in life. He would be much freer, therefore, to go where He liked, without supervision, than a boy of the same age with us, and hence all Jerusalem, with its thousand wonders, lay before Him, to study as He chose.

The week of the feast ended, Joseph and Mary turned their faces towards home. The confusion and bustle around must have been indescribable. Any one who has seen the motley crowds of Easter pilgrims returning from the Jordan at the present day may have some faint idea of the scene. The start is always made at night, to escape the great heat of the day, and in the darkness, lighted only by torches, it needs care not to be trampled under foot. At narrow or difficult parts of the road the noise and confusion are bewildering—women in terror of being trampled down by a long file of camels, tied one behind another; parents calling for lost children; friends shouting for friends; muleteers and ass drivers beating and cursing their beasts; the whole wedged into a moving mass, all alike excited.

As the distance from Jerusalem increased, and different divisions branched off to different roads, danger would cease, and the scene become more picturesque. Veiled women and venerable men would pass, mounted on camels, mules, or perhaps horses; younger men walking alongside, staff in hand; children playing at the side of the path as the cavalcade slowly advanced; and the journey ever and anon beguiled with tabret and pipe. Only when the pilgrims had thus got away from the first crowd, would it be possible for each group to know if all its members were safe.

Among many others, some one of whose family had for the time been separated from them in the confusion, were Joseph and Mary. On reaching their first night's encampment they discovered that the boy Jesus was not in the caravan. He had likely been missed earlier, but He might be with friends in some other part of the caravan. After seeking diligently for Him, however, without success, they were greatly alarmed. Amidst such vast multitudes, He might be lost to them for ever.

Nothing was left but to return to Jerusalem, which they re-entered on the evening of the second day. But they could learn nothing of Him till the day after, when, at last, they found Him in one of the schools of the Rabbis, held in the Temple courts.

These schools were a characteristic of the times. They were open, and any one entering might answer or propose a question. The Rabbi sat on a high seat; his scholars on the ground, at his feet, in half-circles: their one study the Law, with its Rabbinical comments.

In the school in which Jesus was found, a number of Rabbis were present, perhaps because it was the Passover season. The gentle Hillel—the Looser—was perhaps still alive, and may possibly have been among them. The harsh and strict Shammai—the Binder—his old rival, had been long dead. Hillel's son, Rabban Simeon, and

even his greater grandson, Gamaliel, the future teacher of St. Paul, may have been of the number, though Gamaliel would, then, like Jesus, be only a boy. Hanan, or Annas, son of Seth, had been just appointed high priest, but did not likely see Him, as a boy, whom he was afterwards to crucify. Apart from the bitter hostility between the priests and the Rabbis, he would be too busy with his monopoly of doves for the Temple, to care for the discussions of the schools, for he owned the shops for doves on Mount Olivet, and sold them for a piece of gold, though the Law had chosen them as offerings suited for the poorest from their commonness and cheapness.

Among the famous men, then, apparently, living in Jerusalem, was Rabbi Jochanan Ben Zacchai, afterwards reputed a prophet, from his once crying out—when the Temple gate opened of itself—"Temple, Temple, why do you frighten us? We know that thou wilt shortly be destroyed, for it says—'Open, Lebanon, thy gates, and let fire devour thy cedars.'" Jonathan Ben Uzziel, the Targumist, revered by his nation; Rabbi Ben Buta, who, though of Shammai's school, was almost as mild as Hillel, and, like him, had a great reputation for Rabbinical sanctity; now blind these many years, for Herod had put out his eyes; Dosithai of Jethma, a zealous opponent of Herod; Zadok, who had taken part in the rising of Judas the Gaulonite; Boëthus, father of one of Herod's wives—the second Mariamne—once high priest, and now the head of the courtly Herodian and Roman party; Nicodemus, who afterwards came to Jesus by night, and the rich Joseph of Arimathea,—in a grave given by whom Jesus was afterwards to lie, were all apparently, then alive. But we can only conjecture in whose presence Jesus sat, for dates are sadly wanting. One picture alone survives in Scripture, of Hebrew boyhood in its noblest beauty—that of David, with his lustrous eyes, auburn hair, and lovely features. It is no great stretch of fancy to believe that He who was at once David's heir and his lord—the Son of David in a sense higher than man had dreamed—realized the name not less in His personal beauty than in other respects. The passion of His soul —to learn more of His Father's business—had led Him naturally to the famed schools in His Father's house, where the wisest and most learned of His nation made the holy books, in which that Father's will was revealed, their lifelong study. The mystery of His own nature and of His relations to His Father in Heaven was dawning on Him more and more. His mother's words, from time to time, had daily a deeper and more wondrous significance, and His sinless spirit lived more and more in communion with unseen and eternal realities. He had naturally, therefore, sought those who could open for Him the fountains of Heavenly wisdom for which His whole being panted, and was the keenest listener, and the most eager in His questions, of all the group seated at their feet. The days would come when no further growth was possible, and then He would sit in the courts of the same Temple, as a teacher who needed no human help. As yet,

however, He could not honour His Father more than by seeking, as a child, to know His holy Word from its accredited expounders. Enthusiasm so pure and lofty in one so young, lighting up the beauty of such eyes and features, may well have filled the heart of the gravest Rabbi with wonder and delight.

In this school of the Rabbis Mary and Joseph found Him, sitting on the ground, with others, at the feet of the half-circle of "doctors," His whole soul so absorbed in the Law and the Prophets that He had forgotten all other thoughts: His family circle—the flight of time. It was no wonder to find Him in such a place, for as "a Son of the Law" it was only what a Jew expected, but it might well amaze them that He had been so engrossed with such matters as to be still there, after the feast was over, and not only Mary and Joseph, but the great throng of pilgrims, had left for home. As befitted her higher relationship, and with the greater zeal natural to a mother's love in such a case, she, not Joseph, spoke. "Son," said she, "why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." It seemed so strange that one so gentle, docile, and loving, who had never given them an anxious thought by any childish frowardness, should cause them such pain and alarm. The answer, gentle and lofty, must have fallen on Mary's heart as a soft rebuke, though she could not understand its fulness of meaning: "How is it that ye sought me? There was no place where I could so surely be as in my Father's house—there were no matters which could so rightfully fill my thoughts as His?" Her son was outgrowing His childhood: the light of a higher world was breaking in on His soul; the claims of the home of Nazareth fading before others infinitely greater and holier.

A sinless childhood had made the past a long dream of peace and love in the home at Nazareth, and this only deepened as the simplicity of early years passed into the ripeness of a perfect manhood. Though He must have felt the growing distance between Himself and Joseph, or even Mary: their weakness and His own strength: their simplicity and His own wisdom; their frail humanity, touched by daily sin, and His own pure and sinless nature, He remained subject to them, as if only like others. If ever there was a son who might have been expected to claim independence it was He, and yet, to sanctify and enforce filial obedience for ever, He lived on, under their humble roof, exemplary in the implicit and far-reaching obedience of a Jewish youth to his parents.

CHAPTER XVI.

EARLY YEARS.

For nearly eighteen years after the Passover visit to Jerusalem, a deep obscurity rests over the life of Jesus. Like His cousin John, or the shepherd Moses, or the youthful David, He came before the world at last, only after a long and humble seclusion. The quiet valley and hills of Nazareth saw Him gradually ripen into youth and manhood—as son, brother, citizen, neighbour, friend—like others. There was no sudden or miraculous disclosure of His Divine greatness. Like the grain in the fields beneath His early home. His growth was imperceptible. The white, flat-roofed houses of to-day are, doubtless, much the same as those amidst which He played as a child, and lived as a man; vines shading the walls; doves sunning themselves on the flat roofs; the arrangements, within, as simple, as they are unpretending, without. A few mats on the floor, a built seat running along the wall, spread with some modest cushions, and the bright quilts on which the inmates sleep at night, and serving by day as shelf for the few dishes in common use; a painted chest in the corner; some large clay water jars, their mouths filled, perhaps, with sweet herbs, to keep the contents cool and fresh; the only light that entering by the open door; a low, round, painted, wooden stool, brought, at meals, into the middle of the room, to hold the tray and dish, round which the household sit, with crossed knees, on mats—supply the picture of a house at Nazareth of the humbler type. It may be that differences in details were found in early times, for many of the houses of ancient Chorazin are yet tolerably perfect, and show some variations from present dwellings. Generally square, they ranged downwards in size, from about 30 feet each way, and had one or two columns in the centre, to support the flat roof. The walls, which are still, in some cases, six feet high, and about two feet thick, were built of masonry or of loose blocks of basalt, Chorazin being on the volcanic edge of the Sea of Galilee, and not, like Nazareth, on limestone hills. A low doorway opened in the centre of one of the walls, and each house had windows a foot high and about six inches broad. But, like the houses of to-day, most had only one chamber, though some were divided into four.

In the shelter of some such home, in one of the narrow, stony streets of Nazareth, Jesus grew up. On the hill-sides, in the little crossways between the houses, in the rude gardens, in the fields below the town, beside the bounteous fountain on the hill-side, near the road—from which the village mothers and daughters still bear the water for their households—He was a child among other children. As He grew, year by year, His great eyes would shine with a spirit-

ual brightness, and His mind would be filled with strange loneliness that would separate Him from most. He must, inevitably, have, early, seemed as if raised above everything earthly, and no impure word or thought would appear befitting in His presence. As a growing lad, He would already feel the isolation which, in His later years, became so extreme, for how could sinlessness be at home with sin and weakness? He would seek the society of the elders rather than of the young, and, while devoted to Joseph, would be altogether so to His mother. The habits of His later life let us imagine that, even in His youth, He often withdrew to the loneliest retreats in the mountains and valleys round, and we may fancy that Mary, knowing His ways, would cease, after a time, to wonder where He was. One height, we may be sure, was often visited: the mountain-top above the village, from which His eye could wander over the wondrous landscape.

The Passover, though the greatest religious solemnity of the year, was only one in a continually recurring series. Four times each year, in July, October, January, and March, different events in the national history would be more or less strictly observed in the Jewish community at Nazareth. Special fasts were, moreover, ordered, from time to time, in seasons of public danger or distress. These days, set apart for repentance and prayer, excited a general and deep religious feeling. At all times striking, they sometimes, in exceptional cases, were singularly impressive. On special public humiliations all the people covered themselves with sackcloth, and strewed ashes on their heads, as they stood before the Reader's desk, brought from the synagogue into some open place, and similarly draped in mourning. Jesus must have seen this, and how ashes were put on the heads of the local judges and rulers of the synagogue, on such a day, and He must have listened to the Rabbi calling on all present to repent, and to the prayers and penitential psalms which followed, and to the trumpets wailing at the close of each. He may have gone with Joseph and all the congregation, when the service ended, to the burial-place of the village to lament.

But such sadness was by no means the characteristic of the national religion. Fifty days after the Passover, multitudes were once more in motion towards Jerusalem, to attend the Feast of Weeks, or First-Fruits. The vast numbers present at it are recorded in the second chapter of the Acts. It was one of the three great festivities of the year, and there can be little doubt that in His Nazareth life Jesus and the household of Joseph, as a whole, took part in so great and universal a rejoicing.

The intending pilgrims in Nazareth and the district round met in the town, as a convenient centre, to arrange for the journey. As before the Passover, however, no one slept in any house immediately before starting, all going out into the open country and sleeping somewhere in the open air, lest a death might happen where they lodged, and defile them, so that they could not keep the feast. They had to

be in Jerusalem before the 6th of Siwan (June), on which and the 7th the feast was held, and, therefore, set off some days before. The early harvest was mostly over, so that many could go. Wives, unmarried sisters, and children, accompanied not a few. Flocks of sheep and oxen, for sacrifice and feasting, were driven gently along with the bands of pilgrims, and strings of asses and camels, laden with provisions and simple necessaries, or with free-will gifts to the Temple, or bearing the old or feeble, lengthened the train. Every one wore festal clothes, and not a few carried garlands and wreaths of flowers. The cool banks of streams, or some well, offered resting-places by the way, and the pure water, with melons, dates, or cucumbers, sufficed for their simple food. Different bands united as they passed fresh towns and villages. All were roused, each morning, with the cry, "Rise, let us go up to Zion, to the Eternal, our God!" The offerings of first-fruits—the choicest of the year—in baskets of willows, or even of gold or silver; doves for burnt offerings, with their wings bound, and the ox, intended for a peace-offering,—its horns gilded, and bound with wreaths of olive,—went first. Flutes forthwith struck up, and the cavalcade moved on, to the chant, "I was glad when they said to me, We shall go into the house of the Lord." Similar hymns cheered them ever and anon on each day's march. When within sight of Jerusalem, all was enthusiasm. Many threw themselves on their knees in devotion, lifting their hands to heaven. Presently all burst into the grand ode, "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, on the sides of the North, the city of the great King"—the excitement culminating in the climax—"For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death." A halt was now made to get everything in order. All arrayed themselves to the best advantage. The wheatsheaves were wreathed with lilies and the first-fruits bedded in flowers, and set out as effectively as possible. Each company unrolled its banner, bearing the name of the town or village from which it came. When near the city, priests in their white robes came out to meet them, accompanied by a throng of citizens in holiday dress; and as they entered the gates they sang aloud to the accompaniment of flutes, the Psalm, "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." The workmen at their trades in the streets, or at their doors, rose in honour of the procession as it passed, with the greeting, "Men of Nazareth (or elsewhere), welcome!" a great crowd as they advanced, filling the air with gladness. At the Temple hill, every one, rich and poor—for all shared in these processions—took his basket on his shoulder and ascended to the Court of the Men, where the Levites met them, and fell into the procession, singing, to the sound of their instruments, the Psalm, beginning, "Hallelujah! Praise God in His sanctuary; praise Him in the firmament of His power." "I thank Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast heard me, and hast not let mine enemies rejoice over

me." The doves hanging from the baskets were now handed to the priests for burnt offerings, and the first-fruits and gifts delivered, with the words prescribed by Moses, "I profess this day unto the Lord Thy God that I am come into the country which the Lord sware to our fathers to give us. And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which Thou, O Lord, hast given me." The pilgrims then left the Temple, followed by a great throng, some to lodge with relations and friends, others with some of the many hosts inviting them.

There can be little doubt that Jesus was more than once a spectator of such rejoicings, and often in His earlier years saw the vast encampments of pilgrims from every part, round the city: the tents spread on each house-top to lodge the overflowing visitors; the windows and doors decked with branches of trees, and garlands and festoons of flowers, the streets fluttering with banners wreathed with roses and lilies, and filled with gay throngs.

In the month of August another festivity drew many from Nazareth to Jerusalem. In the middle of that month the wood for the Temple, which all Jews had to contribute, was taken to the capital with great rejoicings. The 1st of October, which was celebrated as New Year's day, or the Feast of Trumpets, was the next event in the religious calendar of the months. As the day of the first new moon of the year, it was ushered in, over the land, by a blast of trumpets, and special sacrifices were offered in Jerusalem. No work was done. It was the day, in the eyes of the Jew, on which an account was taken by God of the acts of the past year; the day of judgment, on which the destiny of every one for the coming year was written in the Heavenly books. It was a fast, therefore, rather than a festival. The synagogues were visited earlier than usual for a week before it; special prayers were offered, and no one ate till mid-day or even till sunset. In the synagogue of Nazareth, as elsewhere, its eve was like that of a Sabbath. It must have been a great event in a household like that of Joseph.

The ten days that followed were the Jewish Lent, in preparation for the Day of Atonement, a time so solemn and sacred that it was known as THE DAY. It was a Sabbath of Sabbaths: a day of entire rest. The entire people fasted during the twenty-four hours. Worldly and household affairs were neglected; no one even bathed. The whole day was spent in the synagogue, where each stood wrapped in the white shroud, and wearing the white cap in which he was hereafter to be buried. As was befitting, all disputes between friends and neighbours were required to be settled before it began. Each made a formal confession of his sins before God, in words duly prescribed. It was the most solemn day of the Jewish year.

In the Temple the high priest alone officiated. Jesus would early hear how, for seven days before, he had gone through daily rehearsals of every rite, for fear of his introducing Sadducean innovations, and

had been cleansed by sprinklings of holy water. He would hear how the night before the great day was spent in reading to him, or hearing him read aloud, to keep him awake, for he must not sleep till after next sunset. How must He have felt the puerility of Rabbinism when He learned that the supreme pontiff of the nation had to change his dress, on the great day, six times, to wash his hands and feet eight times, and to bathe his whole body five times, between dawn and sunset! The high priest entered the Holy of Holies four times, to offer incense, to pray, to sprinkle the blood of a goat towards the mercy seat; and, at the close, to bring out the censer. Jesus must often have seen him, clad in white, his golden robes laid aside, with bare feet and covered head, drawing aside the veil, and passing alone into the awful darkness which no one but he ever invaded, and he only on this one day of the year. Rites so countless and intricate that even the historian of Judaism will not attempt to recount them the services of hundreds of priests, the whole culminating in a threefold confession of sin for the nation: the utterance ten times of the mysterious name of God, and the formal absolution of Israel with the sprinkling of blood: the vast congregation of worshippers prostrating themselves on the earth three times, with the cry, "Blessed be His glorious name for ever," at each utterance of the awful name, the high priest responding after each shout, "Ye are clean!" were all seen and watched, again and again, by the future Saviour.

These high solemnities over, the day ended in a reaction natural to the East. No sooner had the exhausted high priest left the Temple, accompanied by throngs, to congratulate him on his safety, than a religious feast began at Jerusalem, and, we may be sure, over all the land. The gardens below Mount Zion, and round the walls, were gay with the maidens of the city, dressed in white, gone to meet the youths, who were to choose their future wives, that evening, from among them.

Five days later came the closing great feast of the year—that of Tabernacles, with its rejoicings—one of the three great annual festivals at which every Israelite was required, if possible, to make a journey to Jerusalem. It celebrated the Forty Years' Wandering in tents, but it was also the great harvest thanksgiving for the fruits of the year, now fully gathered. Like others, Jesus, doubtless, often lived for the week, at least by day, in booths of living twigs, which rose in every court, on every roof, and in the streets and open places of Jerusalem,—and watched the crowds bearing offerings of the best of their fruit to the Temple: each carrying a palm or citron branch as a sign of joy. The merry feasting in every house: the illuminated city: the universal joy, were familiar to Him.

The 25th of Chislew—our December—commemorated the re-opening of the Temple by Judas Maccabæus, after its profanation by the Syrians. It brought another week of universal rejoicings. All through the land the people assembled in their synagogues, carrying

branches of palm and other trees in their hands, and held jubilant services. No fast or mourning could commence during the feast, and a blaze of lamps, lanterns, and torches illuminated every house, within and without, each evening. In Jerusalem the Temple itself was thus lighted up. The young of every household heard the stirring deeds of the Maccabees, to rouse them to noble emulation, and with these were linked the story of the heroic Judith and the Assyrian Holofernes. There was no child in Nazareth that did not know them.

The Feast of Purim brightened the interval between that of Tabernacles and the Passover. It was held on the 14th and 15th Adar—part of our February and March—to embody the national joy at the deliverance, by Esther, of their forefathers in Persia, from the designs of Haman. The whole book of Esther was read at the synagogue service of the evening before, to keep the memory of the great event alive; the children raising their loudest and angriest cries at every mention of the name of Haman; the congregation stamping on the floor, with Eastern demonstrativeness, and imprecating, from every voice, the curse, "Let his name be blotted out. The name of the wicked shall rot." Year by year, in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus must have seen and heard all this, and how the Reader tried to read in one breath, the verses in which Haman and his sons are jointly mentioned, to show that they were hanged together.

Such was the Jewish religious year, with its fifty-nine feast days and its background of fastings, as it passed before the eyes of Jesus. Each incident had its special religious colouring, and the aggregate influence, constantly recurring, impressed itself in a thousand ways on the national language, thoughts, and life. Religion and politics, moreover, are identical in a theocracy, and thus the two principles which most powerfully move mankind constantly agitated every breast. In such an atmosphere Christ spent His whole earthly life.

But neither the synagogue services, nor the feasts at Jerusalem, which the Galilæans delighted to attend, were the supreme influences, humanly speaking, in the growth of Jesus in "wisdom." Like the teaching of the Rabbis, they were only so many aids to the understanding of that sacred book, in which His heavenly Father had revealed Himself to Israel. The Gospels show, in every page, that, like Timothy, Jesus, from a child, knew "the Holy Scriptures." In such a household as that of Joseph, we may be sure that they were in daily use, for there, if anywhere, the Rabbinical rule would be strictly observed, that "three who eat together without talking of the Law, are as if they were eating (heathen) sacrifices." The directness, joy, and naturalness of Christ's religion speak of the unconstrained and holy influences around Him in early years. A wise and tender guidance in the things of God, leading the way to heaven, as well as pointing it out, must have marked both Mary and Joseph. The fond pictures of home and childhood in the Gospels, speak of

personal recollections. The allusions to the innocent playing of children; to their being nearest the Kingdom of Heaven; the picture of a father powerless against his child's entreaty; and that touching outburst at His own homelessness, compared even with the birds and the foxes, show how Christ's mind went back, through life, to the pure and happy memories of Nazareth.

Mary and Joseph, we can scarcely doubt, were, themselves, the earliest teachers of Jesus. At their knees He must have first learned to read the Scriptures. Pious Jewish parents took especial care to have a manuscript of the Law, in the old Hebrew characters, as their especial domestic treasure. Even so early as the Asmonean kings, such rolls were so common in private houses, that the fury of the Syrian king, who wished to introduce the Greek customs and religion, was especially directed against them. In Joseph's day, the supreme influence of the Rabbis and Pharisees must have deepened into a passion the desire to possess such a symbol of loyalty to the faith of Israel. Richer families would have a complete copy of the Old Testament, on parchment, or on Egyptian papyrus; humbler homes would boast a copy of the Law, or a Psalter, and all, alike, gloried in the verses on their door-posts and in their phylacteries. Children had small rolls, containing the S'chma, or the Hallel, or the history of Creation to the flood, or the first eight chapters of Leviticus.

From the modest but priceless instructions of home, Jesus would, doubtless, pass to the school in the synagogue, where He would learn more of the Law, and be taught to write, or rather, to print, for His writing would be in the old Hebrew characters—the only ones then in use.

His deep knowledge of the Scriptures shows itself throughout the Gospels. He has a quotation ready to meet every hostile question. It was so profound that it forced even His enemies to recognize Him as a Rabbi. His frequent retort on the Rabbis themselves—"Have ye not read?" and the deep insight into the spirit of Scripture, which opposes to rubrics and forms the quickening power of a higher life, prove how intensely He must have studied the sacred books, and that the zeal that drew Him, in His boyhood, to the Temple school at Jerusalem, to hear them explained, was the sacred passion of His life. In the Gospels we find two quotations from Genesis, two from Exodus, one from Numbers, two from Deuteronomy, seven from the Psalms, five from Isaiah, one from Hosea, one from Jonah, two from Malachi, two from Daniel, one from Micah, and one from Zechariah, respectively. The whole of the Old Testament was as familiar to Him as the Magnificat shows it to have been to His mother, Mary. It was from the clear fountain of the ancient oracles His childhood drank in the wisdom that cometh from above. They had been His only school-book, and they were the unwearying joy of His whole life. From them He taught the higher spiritual worship which con-

trasted so strongly with the worship of the letter. It was to them He appealed when He rejected what was worthless and trifling in the religious teaching of His day.

The long years of retired and humble life in Nazareth were passed in no ignoble idleness and dependence. The people of the town knew Jesus as, like Joseph, a carpenter, labouring for His daily bread at the occupations which offered themselves in His calling. Study and handiwork were familiarly associated in the Jewish mind, and carried with them no such ideas of incompatibility as with us. "Love handiwork," said Schemaia, a teacher of Hillel, and it was a proverbial saying in the family of Gamaliel, that to unite the study of the Law with a trade kept away sin, whereas study alone was dangerous and disappointing. Rabbis who gave a third of the day to study, a third to prayer, and a third to labour, are mentioned with special honour. Stories were fondly told of famous teachers carrying their work-stools to their schools, and how Rabbi Phinehas was working as a mason when chosen as high priest. Of the Rabbis in honour in Christ's day or later, some were millers, others carpenters, cobblers, tailors, bakers, surgeons, builders, surveyors, money-changers, scribes, carriers, smiths, and even sextons. In a nation where no teacher could receive payment for his instruction the honest industry which gained self-support brought no false shame.

The years at Nazareth must have been diligently used in the observation of the great book of nature, and of man, as well as of written revelation. The Gospels show, throughout, that nothing escaped the eye of Jesus. The lilies and the grass of the field, as He paints them in the Sermon on the Mount; the hen, as it gathers its young, in its mother's love, under its widespread wings; the birds of the air, as they eat and drink, without care, from the bounty around them; the lambs which run to follow the shepherd, but sometimes go astray and are lost in the wilderness; the dogs so familiar in Eastern cities; the foxes that make their holes in the thickets; the silent plants and flowers, the humble life of the creatures of the woods, the air, the fold, and the street, were all, alike, noticed in these early years of preparation. Nor was man neglected. The sports of childhood; the rejoicings of riper life; the bride and the bridegroom; the mourner and the dead; the castles and palaces of princes, and the silken robes of the great; the rich owners of field and vineyard; the steward, the travelling merchant, the beggar, the debtor; the toil of the sower and of the labourer in the vineyard, or of the fisher on the lake; the sweat of the worker; the sighs of those in chains, or in the dungeon, were seen, and heard, and remembered. Nor did He rest merely in superficial observation. The possessions, joys, and sufferings of men, their words and acts, their customs, their pride or humility, pretence or sincerity, failings or merits, were treasured as materials from which, one day, to paint them to themselves. He had, moreover, the same keen eye to note the good in those round Him as their unworthy striving and plan-

ning, their avarice, ambition, passion, or selfishness. It is, indeed, the noblest characteristic in this constant keen-sightedness, that amidst all the imperfections and faults prevailing, He never failed to evoke the hidden good which He often saw even in the most hopeless.

Publicans and sinners were not rejected. Even in them He discovered a better self. In Zaccheus He sees a son of Abraham; in Mary Magdalene He gains a weeping penitent, and in the dying robber He welcomes back a returning prodigal. Nor was it mere intellectual penetration that thus laid bare the secrets of every heart. His search of the bosom is pervaded throughout with the breath of the warmest love. As the brother and friend of all, who has come to seek and to save that which was lost, He looks at men with eyes of infinite pity, whatever their race.

The life of Nazareth, in its quiet and obscurity, is passed over in a few lines by the Evangelists; but in the counsels of God it had its full and all-wise purpose, from first to last, as a preparation for the great work of the closing years of our Lord's life. We cannot conceive of Him otherwise than as furnished from His first appearance in the world with all that was needful in its Saviour: as the incarnation of the divine Word, though for a time silent; the Light which should shine in darkness, though still, for a time, concealed. He must have been marked out from all around Him by His higher spiritual nature, and separated by it from all fellowship with evil. Yet, in His human nature, there must have been the same gradual development, as in other men; such a development as, by its even and steadfast advance, made His life apparently in nothing different from that of His fellow townsmen, else they would not have felt the wonder at Him which they afterwards evinced. The laws and processes of ordinary human life must have been left to mould and form His manhood—the same habits of inquiry; the same need of the collision of mind with mind; of patience during long expectation; of reconciliation to home duties and daily self-denials; of calm strength that leans only upon God. He must have looked out on the world of men from the calm retreat of those years as He, doubtless, often did on the matchless landscape from the hill above the village. The strength and weakness of the systems of the day; the lights and shadows of the human world, would be watched and noted with never-tiring survey, as were the hills and valleys, the clouds and sunshine of the scene around. Year after year passed, and still found Him at His daily toil, because His hour was not yet come. In gentle patience, in transparent blamelessness of life; in natural and ever-active goodness; in tender love and ready favour to all around; loved, honoured, but half veiled in the mysterious light of perfect manhood and kindling divinity, thirty years passed quietly away.

CHAPTER XVII.

LIFE UNDER THE LAW.

Besides the humbler schools of the towns and villages, there were others in Jerusalem, and in some of the larger centres of population, in the days of Christ, in which a higher education was given by the Rabbis—the learned class of the nation. There was nothing, however, to attract Jesus to such schools, though He had been so eager in His attendance during His first brief visit to Jerusalem. It may be that even so short a trial was enough to show Him how little could be gained from them.

The wonderful revival of Judaism under Ezra and his associates had had the most lasting effect on the nation. An order known, indifferently, as "Scribes," "Teachers of the Law," or "Rabbis," gradually rose, who devoted themselves to the study of the Law exclusively, and became the recognized authorities in all matters connected with it. It had been a command of the Great Synagogue that those who were learned in the Law should zealously teach it to younger men, and, thus, schools rose, ere long, in which famous Rabbis gathered large numbers of students. The supreme distinction accorded to the Rabbi in society at large, in which he was by far the foremost personage: the exaggerated reverence claimed for his office by his order itself, and sanctioned by the superstitious homage of the people; the constant necessity for reference to its members, under a religion which prescribed rules for every detail of social or private life, and, not least, the fact that the dignity of a Rabbi was open to the humblest who acquired the necessary learning, made the schools very popular. As the son of a peasant, in the middle ages, if he entered the Church, might rise above the haughtiest noble, the son of a Jewish villager might rise above even the high priest, by becoming a Rabbi. It was, doubtless, remembered, in Christ's day, that some sixty years before, when the high priest had been returning from the Temple after the service of the Day of Atonement, attended, according to custom, by a crowd, to congratulate him on his having come safely from the terrors of the Awful Presence, and to escort him to his dwelling—two Rabbis having chanced to pass by, the people left the high priest, greatly to his indignation, and paid reverence, instead, to the Teachers of the Law. The most abject prostration of intellect and soul before any priesthood never surpassed that of the Jew before the Rabbi.

From their scholars the Rabbis demanded the most profound reverence. "The honour," says the Talmud, "due to a Teacher borders on that due to God." If a choice were necessary between one's father and a Rabbi, the Rabbi must have the preference. A father has only brought him into the world, but the Rabbi, who teaches him wisdom,

brings him to the life hereafter. If one's father and a Rabbi be carrying burdens, the burden of the Rabbi must be carried for him, and not that of the father. If one's father and a Rabbi be both in prison, the Rabbi must first be redeemed, and only then, the father. The common discourse of a Rabbi was to be reverenced as much as the Law. To dispute with one, or murmur against him, was a crime as great as to do the same towards the Almighty. Their words must be received as words of the living God. As in the blind passive obedience required from the Jesuits, a scholar of the Rabbis was required to accept what his master taught, if he said that the left hand was the right. A scholar who did not rise up before his Rabbi could not hope to live long, because "he feareth not before God." It was a principle universally accepted that "the sayings of the Scribes were weightier than those of the Law."

The transmission of the as yet unwritten opinions of former Rabbis —forming an ever-growing mass of tradition—was the special aim of the Rabbis of each age. In the course of centuries many of the Mosaic laws had become inapplicable to the altered state of things, and as their literal observance had become impossible, new prescriptions began to be invented, after the Return, to perpetuate their spirit. Many were virtually obsolete: others required careful exposition by the Rabbis. The comments thus delivered formed, as time rolled on, a great body of unwritten law, which claimed equal authority with the law of Moses, and was necessarily known in any full degree only by the professional Rabbis, who devoted their lives to its study. It might be increased, but could never be altered or superseded in any particular. Once uttered, a Rabbi's words remained law for ever, though they might be explained away and virtually ignored, while affected to be followed.

Uniformity of belief and ritual practice was the one grand design of the founders of Judaism; the moulding the whole religious life of the nation to such a machine-like discipline as would make any variation from the customs of the past well-nigh impossible. A universal, death-like conservatism, permitting no change in successive ages, was established, as the grand security for a separate national existence, by its isolating the Jew from all other races, and keeping him for ever apart. For this end, not only was that part of the Law which concerned the common life of the people—their Sabbaths, feast days, jubilees, offerings, sacrifices, tithes, the Temple and Synagogue worship, civil and criminal law, marriage, and the like—explained, commented on, and minutely ordered by the Rabbis, but also that portion of it which related only to the private duties of individuals in their daily religious life. Their food, their clothes, their journeys, their occupations: indeed, every act of their lives, and almost their every thought, were brought under Rabbinical rules. To perpetuate the Law, a "hedge" of outlying commands was set round it, which, in Christ's day, had become so "heavy and grievous a burden," that even the

Talmud denounces it as a vexatious oppression. So vast had the accumulation of precepts become, by an endless series of refined deductions from the Scriptures—often connected with them only by a very thin thread at best—that the Rabbis themselves have compared their laws on the proper keeping of the Sabbath to a mountain which hangs on a hair.

In the later Grecian age, when heathen culture was patronized by the Sadducean high priests, and foreign customs were in increasing favour with the people, the Rabbis, who were the zealots or puritans of Judaism, sought to stem the flood of corruption, by enforcing increased strictness in the observance of the multitudinous precepts they had already established. From that time unconditional obedience was required to every Rabbinical law.

A system which admitted no change: in which the least originality of thought was heresy: which required the mechanical labour of a lifetime to master its details, and which occupied its teachers with the most trifling casuistry, could have only one result—to degenerate, to a great extent, into puerilities and outward forms.

It would be wearisome and uninteresting to quote, at any great length, illustrations of the working of such a scheme of ecclesiastical tyranny, in daily life, but an example or two will show the system to which Jesus opposed the freedom of a spiritual religion. It is difficult to realize the condition of a people who had submitted to such mental and bodily bondage.

One of the great questions discussed by the Rabbis was ceremonial purity and defilement, a subject so wide that it gave rise to countless rules. Uncleanness could be contracted in many ways; among others, by the vessels used in eating, and hence it was a vital matter to know what might be used, and what must be avoided. In hollow dishes of clay or pottery, the inside and bottom contracted and caused uncleanness, but not the outside, and they could only be cleansed by breaking. The pieces, however, might still defile, and hence it was keenly discussed how small the fragments must be to ensure safety. If a dish or vessel had contained a lôg of oil, a fragment could still defile that held as much oil as would anoint the great toe; if it had held from a lôg to a seah, the fragment, to be dangerous, must hold the fourth of a lôg; if it had held from two or three seahs to five, a piece of it could defile if it held a lôg. As, however, hollow earthen vessels contracted uncleanness only on the inside, not on the out, some could not become unclean—as, for instance, a flat plate without a rim, an open coal shovel, a perforated roaster for wheat or grain, brick-moulds, and so on. On the other hand, a plate with a rim, a covered coal shovel, a dish with raised divisions inside, an earthen spice-box, or an inkstand with any divisions, may become unclean. Flat dishes of wood, leather, bone, or glass, do not contract uncleanness, but hollow ones might do so, not only like earthen ones, inside, but also outside. If they are broken they are clean, but the broken part is unclean if large enough

to hold a pomegranate. If a chest, or cupboard, wants a foot, it is clean, whatever its size, and a three-footed table, wanting even two feet, is clean, but it may be made unclean if wanting the whole three feet, and the flat top be used as a dish. A bench which wants one of the side boards, or even the two, is clean, but if a piece remain a handbreadth wide, it may defile. If the hands are clean, and the outside of a goblet unclean, the hands are not defiled by the outside, if the goblet be held by the proper part. Everything of metal, that has a special name, may defile, except a door, a door bolt, a lock, a hinge, or a door knocker. Straight blowing horns are clean; others may defile. If the mouthpiece is of metal, it may defile. If a wooden key have metal teeth, it may defile, but if the key be of metal and the teeth of wood, it is clean.

The removal of uncleanness was no less complicated. Even the kind of water to be used for the different kinds of cleansing, for sprinkling the hands, for dipping vessels into, and for purifying baths for the person, caused no little dispute. Six kinds of water were distinguished, each of higher worth than the other. First—A pool, or the water in a pit, cistern, or ditch, and hill water that no longer flows, and collected water, of not less quantity than forty seahs, if it has not been defiled, is suitable for preparing the heave-offering of dough, or for the legal washing of the hands. Second—Water that still flows may be used for the heave-offering (Teruma), and for washing the hands. Third—Collected water, to the amount of forty seahs, may be used for a bath for purification, and for dipping vessels into. Fourth—A spring with little water, to which water that has been drawn is added, is fit for a bath, though it do not flow, and is the same as pure spring water, in so far that vessels may be cleansed in it, though there be only a little water. Fifth—Flowing water which is warm, or impregnated with minerals, cleanses by its flowing; and lastly, sixth—Pure spring water may be used as a bath by those who have sores, or for sprinkling a leper, and may be mixed with the ashes of purification.

These general principles formed the basis of an endless detail of casuistry. Thus, the Mischna discourses, at wearisome length, under what circumstances and conditions "collected water"—that is, rain, spring, or flowing water, that is not drawn, but is led into a reservoir directly, by pipes or channels—may be used for bathing, and for the immersion of vessels; and the great point is decided to be that no drawn water shall have mixed with it. A fourth of a lôg of drawn water in the reservoir, beforehand, makes the water that afterwards falls or runs into it unfit for a bath, but it requires three lôg of drawn water to do this, if there were water already in the reservoir. If any vessels are put under the pipe emptying itself into the bath, it becomes drawn water, and is unfit for a bath. Shammai's school made it the same whether the vessel were set down on purpose, or only forgotten; but Hillel's school decided that if it had been forgotten, the water

might still be used for a bath. If drawn water and rain water have mixed, in the court-yard, or in a hollow, or on the steps of the bath-room, the bath may be used, if most of the water be fitting, but not if the proportion be reversed. This, however, only takes effect if they have mixed before entering the bath. If both flow into the bath, the bath may be taken, if it be known certainly that forty seahs of proper water ran in before three lôg of unsuitable water, but otherwise it must not be taken. There was endless discussion, also, whether snow, hail, hoarfrost, ice, and the like, could be used to fill up a bath. So simple an act as the washing of one's hands before eating entailed the utmost care not to transgress some Rabbinical rule. The water could only be poured from certain kinds of vessels, it must be water of a special kind, only certain persons, in certain legal conditions, could pour it, and it was a momentous point that the water should be poured neither too far up the arm nor too low towards the hand.

This ceremonial slavery owed its rise to the reaction from the Syrian attempts to overthrow the national faith. The Rabbis of the austere but noble puritan party, which had delivered their country, sought to widen the gulf, for the future, between Judaism and all other creeds, by laying a fresh stress on legal purity and the reverse, and their scholars strove to keep their rules as strictly as possible. The dread of touching anything unclean, and the consequent self-withdrawal from the mass of the people, and from the ordinary intercourse of life, soon showed itself in the name—Parusch, or Pharisee—for those thus "separated." In the hands of this party, cleanness and uncleanness steadily grew to a system of endless refinements.

Ceremonial purity had, at first, been strictly observed only by the priests, for the people at large were hardly in a position to attend to the many details required. After the Maccabæan revival, however, greater carefulness was demanded. A priest, or Levite, lost the privileges of his caste if he hesitated to fulfil any of the ritual obligations it entailed, and a proselyte was rejected who would not undertake all that was required from an Israelite. For Israelites themselves, these ceremonial rules were greatly extended, and any neglect of them was noted unfavourably. The tithes, &c., were strictly demanded from all produce, and were either entirely forbidden to be eaten, or could be so only under fixed conditions, while a wide sweep of injunctions and rules was introduced as to the use of different kinds of food, and even in every detail of family life.

Those, including, of course, the Rabbis, who undertook to observe all these rules, henceforth formed a kind of union of "Comrades," or "Haberim," which any one might enter—all who did not join them being stigmatized as ignorant Am-ha-aretz, or boorish rabble.

It was to this league that the amazing development of legalism was latterly due. Careful inquiry was everywhere instituted to ascertain if all dues for priests, Levites, or the poor were regularly paid. An

indefinite due (Teruma) for the priests, and a tithe for them and the Levites, were required each year from every kind of farm or garden produce, even the smallest, and from all live stock, and property of any kind, and a second tenth each third year for the poor. Nor were these demands confined to Israelites living in the strictly Jewish territory; they were, after a time, extended over those neighbouring countries in which Jews had settled. These material results were only a subordinate advantage of this widely extended claim; it established an organized system of all-pervading influence in social intercourse, and on the private life of every household. Part of the dues was *holy*, and to use anything *holy* was a mortal sin. Every purchaser had, therefore, to make certain beforehand whether they had been paid from what he proposed to buy, though many things in the markets came from abroad, or had been grown or made by others than Jews, or were under other complications as regarded their liability to tithe and gift.

To save heavy loss it was conceded that the Teruma should be strictly separated, but the various tithes were apparently left to be paid by the buyer, though the assurance of an owner that everything had been tithed could only be taken if the seller could prove his trustworthiness. Failing this, all produce, and whatever was made from it, was regarded as doubtful, and the Teruma, or holy portion, was to be taken from it before it could be used. The second tithe might be turned into money, that it might be the more easily consumed in Jerusalem. It was not obligatory, however, to separate the first tithe, or that for the poor, since a doubt hung on the matter, and so the Levite or the poor must prove their claim. These harassing regulations shut off strict Jews from either buying or accepting hospitality from any but their own nation, and made it imperative on every fruit or food seller to establish his trustworthiness, by joining the union of the "Comrades," or "Separated"—that is, the "Pharisees." It required for this, only a declaration before three of the Rabbis, and afterwards before three "trustworthy" persons, that one would henceforth abstain from all that had not been tithed. Henceforth, not only was personal trustworthiness established, but that of all the members of his family, and even of his descendants, so long as no ground of suspicion was raised against his wife, children, or slaves.

The nation was thus gradually divided into Haberim and Am-haaretz—strict followers of the Rabbis and despised rabble,—and intercourse and hospitality between the two classes became steadily more circumscribed, till it well-nigh ceased, as the laws of the Rabbis grew more exacting. It was difficult, for instance, when from home, to ascertain the conscientiousness of a host, companion, or tradesman; scruples rose whether produce that might be foreign was liable to dues; how far purchases not intended for eating might be used without tithing, and so on, till all social freedom was utterly hampered,

and cases of conscience accumulated which afterwards filled whole volumes, and meanwhile gave constant anxiety.

This self-isolation from the community at large of the members of the "League of the Law," procured them the name of Peruschim, or Pharisees—that is, the separated—and introduced different grades of purity even among them, according to the greater or less strictness in the observance of the multitudinous Rabbinical rules. Religiousness consisted, above everything, in avoiding ceremonial defilement, or removing it, if at any time contracted, by prescribed washings and bathing. Rules for preserving Mosaic purity multiplied the risks of defilement as casuistry increased, and thus a graduated scale of "holiness" was introduced, rising to the harshest asceticism in its highest development. To partake of anything from which the due tithes had not been separated, or of the tithe itself, or the priest's portion, the hands must be washed. Before eating parts of sacrifices or offerings, a bath had to be taken, and a plunge bath was required before the sprinkling with water of purification, even if only the hands were "unclean." But he who bathed in order to partake of what was as yet untithed, had not the right to make use of the tithe; he who took a bath to qualify him to enjoy the tithe could not touch the priest's portion: he who could touch *that*, could not eat what was *holy*, while he who might touch *it*, must yet keep from water of purification. The higher grades, on the other hand, included the less holy. Even to touch the clothes of a "common man," defiled a Pharisee; the clothes of an ordinary Pharisee were unclean to one who could eat tithes; those of an eater of tithes to an eater of offerings; and his, again, to one who enjoyed the sprinkling of the water of purification. Some gained one grade, some another, but few the highest. A special initiation, training, and time of trial was required for each grade, from thirty days for the lowest, to twelve months for the highest.

Religiousness was thus measured by the more or less complete observance of ten thousand Rabbinical rules of ceremonial purity, and fanatical observance of them was secured, not less by religious pride, than by their appeal to a spurious patriotism, and to self-interest. This severe and inflexible discipline, which regulated every act of life, foresaw every contingency, and interfered with common liberty, at every step, from the cradle to the grave, had been slowly elaborated by the Rabbis, to isolate the Jew from all other nations. His very words and thoughts were prescribed; he was less a man than a mechanical instrument. Any deviation in word or deed, or even in thought, from Rabbinical law, was regarded as impious.

Theocracies have enforced in all ages a similar isolation on their adherents. "The kings of Egypt," says Diodorus, "could not act as they would. Everything was ruled by laws, not only in their public, but even in their most private life. The hours of the day and night at which special duties must be performed, were fixed by law.

Those for sleep, for rising, for bathing, for sacrifice, for reading, for meals, for walking, and much beside, were inflexibly prescribed. It was no less rigidly settled what they were to eat at each meal, and what amount of wine they were to drink." The Brahmin is under the same rigid and all-embracing tyranny of religious forms. His whole life is covered with the meshes of a vast net of rites and ceremonies. The law of Manu prescribes how he is to eat, and what, how he is to clothe himself, drink, wash his feet, cut his nails and hair, bathe, and perform even the most private functions. It fixes the rights and duties of each caste and subdivision of caste, the washers, the weavers, the tillers of the soil, &c. Such systems annihilate individuality, and reduce whole populations to a single type, which perpetuates itself with an unchanging and almost indestructible constancy, begetting, besides, a fanaticism which, at any moment, may burst into flames, especially when identified, as in the case of the Jews, with patriotism. Life under the Jewish law had already kindled this spirit of scarcely veiled revolution long before our Lord's birth.

An additional illustration of the working of Rabbinical rules in Jewish daily life is afforded by those for the proper observance of the Sabbath. In Exodus xvi. 5, it is commanded that food for the Sabbath be prepared on the sixth day, no doubt with the design, that the rest of the servant should be as sacred as that of her master or mistress. The Rabbis, pondering this command, raised the question, whether an egg which a hen had laid on a Sabbath could be eaten on the sacred day, and decided it by a strict negative, if it had been laid by a hen kept to lay eggs; because, in that case, it was the result of work begun on a week-day, and brought to an end on the Sabbath. On this the Rabbis were unanimous. But how would it be if the hen were one intended not to lay eggs, but for eating, and how, if a Sabbath, and a feast day, observed as a Sabbath, should come together? On this point Shammai, one of the two great Rabbis of the day, was disposed to be liberal, and decided that it was lawful to eat the egg of a hen, itself destined to be eaten, on whichever day the egg had been laid. But Hillel, the other great Rabbi, argued as follows:— Since the egg has come to maturity on a Sabbath or feast day, and is therefore of unlawful origin, it is not allowed to make use of it; and though it would be lawful to make use of the egg of such a hen, laid on a feast day or Sabbath, not followed or preceded by another similarly sacred day, yet it must not be eaten if two such days come together, because, otherwise, there would be a temptation to use it on the second holy day. And since it is forbidden even to carry unlawful food from one place to another, such an egg must not only not be eaten, but must not be touched, to put it away. The conscientious man, therefore, is not to put a finger on it, for *that* might lead to his taking it altogether into his hand, and is not even to look at it, for *that* might possibly make him wish he could eat it. Hillel's opinion

carried the day, for, says the Talmud, "There came a voice from heaven, saying—'The words of both are the words of the living God, but the rule of the school of Hillel is to be followed.'"

These worthless puerilities were in keeping with the fantastic exaggerations in which many of the Rabbis delighted. What shall we say of a learned order which has treasured in that great repertory of its sayings and acts, the Talmud, such wild Eastern inventions as that Adam, when created, was so tall that his head reached heaven, and so terrified the angels by his gigantic size, that they all ascended to the upper heavens, to God, and said, "Lord of the world, two powers are in the earth!" and that, on this, God put His hand on the head of Adam, and reduced his height to only a thousand cubits—over fifteen hundred feet! We are told that there were sixty thousand towns in the mountains of Judea, each with sixty thousand inhabitants; that there is a bird so large that when it flies it intercepts the light of the sun; that when the Messiah comes, Jerusalem will have ten thousand palaces and the same number of towers, that there will be a hundred and eighty thousand shops of vendors of perfumes alone; that Adam had two faces and a tail; that from one shoulder to the other Solomon measured not less than sixty cubits; and that at one blow of an axe David killed two hundred men.

The form of teaching in the schools of the Rabbis was by question and answer. The teacher propounded questions of legal casuistry to the scholars, and let them give their opinions, adding his own if he thought fit. The scholars also could propose questions in their turn. They sat, during class time, on the ground, the teacher, on a raised seat, known as the seat of Moses. As all the knowledge of the Law was strictly traditional and oral, teacher and scholar alike had to depend entirely on memory, the one faculty of supreme importance to both. To attain high fame, a Rabbi must have the reputation of knowing the whole immense mass of tradition down to his day, by heart, so as to be able to cite authorities for any possible question. Originality was superstitiously dreaded, and nothing more shrinkingly avoided than the giving any opinion unsupported by that of some former Rabbi. To forget a single word he had heard from his teacher was an inexpiable crime on the part of a scholar.

The feats of memory produced by such a system were so amazing, that we may readily credit the tradition of the whole Talmud having been learned by heart, in sections, by he disciples of a Persian Rabbi, who feared that all the copies of it would be destroyed, in a local persecution, in the seventh century. The mass of the Rabbis, to use a Jewish phrase, must have been mere book-baskets; grown children, full of the opinions of others, but piously free from any of their own—the ideal of pedants.

The Rabbis were both jurists and preachers. They explained, defined, and taught the Law in their schools; gave judicial opinions and decisions on it in their official meetings, and delivered expositions

of Scripture, in their own style, to the people in the synagogues. Their systems of interpretation were peculiar. The professional statement of Rabbinical law, on one point or other, occupied them chiefly; for every Rabbinical precept had to be justified, not only by precedents, but by some reference to the written law, and this often required both tediousness and ingenuity. There was no end of points on which a legal opinion was volunteered from the synagogue pulpit, and trifles infinitesimal to any but Jews, served for ceaseless wrangling in the schools.

The interpretation of Scripture gave even more scope to Rabbinical fancy. Three modes were in vogue: the using single letters to explain whole words or clauses: what was called the practical exposition; and what bore the name of the "Mystery"—an elucidation of the lofty secrets of the Creation, the world of angels, and such transcendental matters, from the most improbable sources. Rules were provided for the treatment of these different methods, but the utmost license prevailed, notwithstanding. The nature and value of the instruction thus given may be judged from some illustrations of the teaching, in the days of our Lord, respecting the secret power of numbers.

In the first and last verses of the Bible the first letter, Aleph (א), occurs six times, and as six alephs are equal to our figures 6,000—for the Jews used letters for figures—it was held to be proved by this that the world would last 6,000 years. Words in a verse might be exchanged for others whose letters were of equal numerical value. Thus the statement, which greatly offended the Rabbis, that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman—in violation of his own law—was explained as a figure of speech which hid an orthodox meaning. The letters of the word "Cushith" כּוּשִׁית, an "Ethiopian woman," when added together as figures, represented 736, and the letters of the much more flattering words, "fair of face," made the same sum, and, therefore, they were clearly the true meaning!

Another fancy was to explain texts by putting the numerical value of a word in the place of the word itself. Thus, in Proverbs viii 21, the word which we have translated—"substance"—was read as the number 310, its value in figures, and the doctrine educed from it that God will give 310 worlds to every just man as his inheritance!

This strange system was so much in vogue in the days of our Lord that it occurs even in the New Testament, and in early Christian writings. In the book of Revelation the name of "the Beast" is veiled from common eyes by the mystical number 666, but the reason for its being so becomes very apparent when we find that it is a cypher for the letters of the name of NERO. The early Christians imagined that God had already revealed the doctrine of the Cross to Abraham in the number of his servants—318: for 18 is written in Greek letters, *IH*—the symbol of the word Jesus, and 300 is the letter T, which means the Cross! With the same liking for mystery,

801 was used as the symbol for Christ, because the Greek word for dove (περιστερὰ) makes that cypher, and so do the letters Alpha and Omega.

This love of the mystical prevailed in all Rabbinical teaching. Thus the account of the Creation and Ezekiel's vision of the Wheel were made the foundation of the wildest fancies. "Ten things," we are told, "were created in the twilight of the first Sabbath eve:—The abyss below the earth (for Korah and his company); the mouth of the spring (of Miriam, which gave the tribes water in the wilderness); the mouth of Balaam's she ass; the rainbow; the manna in the wilderness; the rod of Moses; the schamir (a worm which cleaves rocks); alphabetical characters; the characters of the Tables of the Law; and the Tables of stone themselves. Some Rabbis add to these —evil spirits, the grave of Moses, and the ram that was caught in the thicket.

Such was the teaching of the Rabbis, as a whole, though even in such sandy wastes there were not wanting specks of verdure, as one still sees in the Talmud. Finer minds here and there, for a moment, gave a human interest to these teachings, or touched the heart by poetry, and simple feeling. But, as a rule, the "Law," to the study of which the youth of Israel were summoned so earnestly, was a dreary wilderness of worthless trifling. The spell of the age was on all minds, and bound them in intellectual slavery. On every side, Christ, in His childhood and youth, heard such studies extolled as the sum of wisdom, and as the one pursuit supremely pleasing to God. Yet He rose wholly above them, and with immense originality and force of mind, valued them at their true worthlessness, leaving no trace of their spirit in the Gospels, but breathing, instead, only that of the most perfect religious freedom. It has been sometimes insinuated that He only followed the teachers of His nation: that He was indebted to Hillel, or to the Pharisees as a class: but enough has been said to show that the latter were the representatives of all that He most utterly opposed, and the distance between Him and Hillel may be measured by their respective estimates of the sanctity of the marriage bond, which Hillel treated so lightly as to sanction divorce, if a wife burned her husband's dinner.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JUDEA UNDER ARCHELAUS AND ROME.

THE death of Herod removed the strong hand that for more than a generation had repressed alike the hatreds and the hopes of the nation. Fanaticism had muttered in secret, and had at last burst out in the tumults at the Temple, just before he died; but when he was gone, there was no one to hold the wild forces in check that had so long been pent up.

His reign had served the purpose, in providence, of delaying the breaking up of the Jewish people, and its being scattered among the nations, and made its dissolution easier in the end; and, on the other hand, it had called forth the sympathies of heathenism for Judaism more strongly, and had conquered lasting rights for it among the nations, as in a sense the salt of the earth and as the forerunner of Christianity.

The rejoicings of the nation, that the scandal of an Edomite sitting on the throne of David was past, knew no bounds. A negro conqueror, at the White House in Washington, in the days of slavery, would scarcely have raised such indignant hatred, or have been so revolting to the national instincts of the white population of America, as an Edomite reigning on Mount Zion was to the Jews. Even the founders of the two races had been mortal enemies, as the twin sons of Abraham, and Jewish tradition embittered the story of Genesis, by adding that, at last, Esau, killed Jacob with an arrow from his bow. When Israel was coming from Egypt, Edom had refused it a passage through its territory, and had entailed on it the dreary years of wandering in the wilderness. The Edomites had been mortal enemies of its first king. David had conquered them, and he and Solomon had reigned over them. In the decline of Israel under its later kings, they had been its deadliest and most implacable foes. They had joined the Chaldeans in the final conquest of Judea under Nebuchadnezzar, and had rejoiced over the destruction of Jerusalem, in the hope of getting possession of its richer territory, and adding it to their own wild mountain land. The prophets, from Amos and Joel, in the ninth century before Christ, had denounced them as the bitterest enemies of the theocracy. "Edom shall be a desolate wilderness," cried Joel, "for their violence against the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in the land." "For three transgressions of Edom, or for four, saith Jehovah," cried Amos, "I will not turn away the punishment thereof, because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever. But I will send a fire upon Teman, which shall devour the palaces of

Bozrah." Obadiah, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, taunted them with having been among the enemies of Israel, in the day when strangers carried away captive the force of the land, and foreigners entered its gates and cast lots on Jerusalem, and with having rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction. Jeremiah and Ezekiel had denounced the wrath of God against them, and, indeed, every prophet had proclaimed them the enemies of God, whom Israel was one day to crush with an utter destruction. During the exile they took possession of great part of the territory of Judah, and were only finally driven back, by John Hyrcanus, who conquered them 130 years before Christ, and compelled them to submit to circumcision. The deadly hatred of centuries was intensified by such a history. "Thou hatest me," says Jacob to Esau, in the book of Jubilees, "thou hatest me and my sons for ever, and no brotherly love can be kept with thee. Hear this, my word, which I say—When I can change the skin and the bristles of a swine to wool, and when horns spring from its head like the horns of a sheep, then will I have brotherly love to thee; and when wolves make peace with lambs, that they shall not devour them or spoil them, and when they turn their hearts to each other to do each other good, then shall I be at peace with thee in my heart; and when the lion is the friend of the ox, and goes in the yoke and ploughs with him, then will I make peace with thee; and when the raven grows white, then shall I know that I love thee, and shall keep peace with thee. Thou shalt be rooted out, and thy sons shall be rooted out, and thou shalt have no peace." It is thus that a Jew speaks of Edom, apparently in the very days of Herod, and it is only the natural culmination, when he prophesies, in the next chapter, that the sons of Jacob will once more subdue and make bondslaves of the hated race.

Yet one of this execrated and despised people had for more than a generation ruled over Israel! His death was the removal of a national reproach, that had been bitter beyond words. The hope of the land now was that the abhorred usurper might prove the last of his race on the throne of Judah. Archelaus in his stead was even worse than to have had Herod, for he was not only of Idumean blood, but his mother was of the equally hated race of the Samaritans! Rome, rather than Edom or Samaria!

Palace intrigues, and especially the systematic whisperings of Antipater, who hated his brothers as rivals, had caused Herod to change his will once and again in his last years. In the end nothing seemed likely to put an end to the rivalries of his family but the breaking up of the kingdom, which it had been the work of his life to create. His latest gained territories beyond the Jordan were left to Philip, the son of Cleopatra, a maiden of Jerusalem, whom Herod had married for her beauty. Galilee, with Perea, he left to his son Antipas, and Judea, Idumea, and Samaria, with the title of king, to Archelaus,

both sons of Malthake. He had at one time intended to have left the whole kingdom to Herod, son of the second Mariamne, as successor to Antipater, but the complicity of the mother of that prince in the intrigues of the Rabbis was fatal to him. Salome, Herod's sister, the ruthless enemy of the Maccabæan family, received the gift of the towns of Jamnia and Ashdod in the Philistine plain, and of Phasaelis, in the palm groves of the Jordan valley.

As soon as Herod was dead his sister Salome and her husband set free a multitude of the leading men of the Jews, whom Herod had summoned to Jericho, that he might have them butchered at his own death. They next assembled the army and the people in the amphitheatre at Jericho, and having read a letter left by the dead king for the soldiers, opened his will, which, with his ring, was to be carried forthwith to Cæsar, that the settlements might be confirmed, and the due acknowledgment of dependence made. Meanwhile, the soldiers hailed Archelaus as king, and forthwith took the oath of allegiance to him. It was noted, however, that Archelaus held a grand feast on the night of his father's death.

This over, the funeral of Herod followed, after due preparation. All the magnificence of the palace had been laid in contribution. The body lay on a couch of royal purple; a crown and diadem on its head; a sceptre in its right hand; a purple pall covering the rest; the couch itself resting on a bier of gold, set with a great display of the most precious stones. Herod's sons and a multitude of his kindred walked on each side, and followed. Next came Herod's favourite regiments: the body guard given him by Augustus at Cleopatra's death; the Thracian corps; the German regiment; and the regiment of Gauls, all with their arms, standards, and full equipments; then the whole army, horse and foot, in long succession, in their proudest bravery. Five hundred slaves and freedmen of the court carried sweet spices for the burial, and so they swept on, amidst wailings of martial music, and, doubtless, of hired mourners, by slow stages, to the new fortress Herodium, ten miles south of Jerusalem, where the dead king had built a grand tomb for himself. But if there were pomp and pageantry to do him honour, there was little love on the part either of the nation or of his family, for Archelaus, who had prepared all this magnificence, quarrelled with his relations about the succession on the way, and scarcely had the corpse reached the first half-hour's stage, before disturbances broke out in Jerusalem.

Archelaus paid the customary reverence of a seven days' mourning after the burial, closing them with a magnificent funeral feast to the people. He then laid aside his robes of mourning and put on white, and having gone up to the Temple, harangued the multitude from a throne of gold, thanking them for their ready submission to him, and making great promises for the future, when he should be confirmed in the kingdom by Augustus. The crowds heard him peaceably till he ended, but he had no sooner done so, than some began to clamour

for a lightening of the taxes, and others for the liberation of those in prison on account of the late religious insurrection. All this he readily promised, and retired to the palace. Towards evening, however, crowds gathered at the gates, and began lamenting the Rabbis and the young men, put to death by Herod for cutting down the golden eagle over the Temple, in the late tumult, and demanding that the officials who had executed Herod's commands should be punished; clamouring, besides, for the deposition of Joazar, of the house of Boëthos, whom Herod, in compliment for having married into the family, had appointed high priest in the place of Mattathias, a friend of the national cause. More dangerous still, they demanded that Archelaus should at once rise against the Romans, and drive them out of the country. His utmost efforts to appease them were vain. Each day saw a greater tumult, and, to make matters worse, the city was filling with countless multitudes coming to the Passover, now at hand. Force alone could restore order, and this he was at last compelled, most reluctantly, to use. A bloody street battle followed, in which 3,000 were slain, and the Passover guests were shut out of the city, and returned home without having been able to keep the feast. The winds, long chained by Herod, had broken loose.

Archelaus forthwith set off for Rome, leaving Philip regent in his absence. Doris, Herod's wife, Salome, his sister, and other members of the family, went with him, ostensibly to support his claims, but in reality to oppose him, for the family hated him as the son of a Samaritan, and, even more, as a second Herod. Antipas, also, started for Rome, to plead his own claims to the kingdom, on the strength of a former will, and, as the elder, was secretly supported in his enterprise, with refined treachery, even by those who escorted Archelaus.

The family would have liked an oligarchy, in which all could share, better than any king, but preferred a Roman governor to either Archelaus or Antipas; but if one of these two must be chosen, they wished Antipas rather than his brother, whom they all hated. At Rome the two claimants canvassed eagerly among the Senators, in favour of their rival causes, and lowered their dignity by unseemly disputes. Meanwhile, a deputation of fifty Jews arrived from Jerusalem to protest against Archelaus being made king, and to ask the incorporation of Judea with Syria, as part of a Roman province, under a Roman governor, in the idea that Rome would be content with their submission and tribute, and leave the nation independent in its religious affairs. The embassage was received with great enthusiasm by the Jews of Rome, eight thousand of whom escorted them to the Temple of Apollo, where Augustus gave them audience. All possible charges against Herod, though now dead, were detailed at length—his wholesale proscriptions and confiscations; his adorning foreign cities, and neglecting those of his own kingdom; his excessive taxation, and much more; the petitioners adding that they had hoped for milder treatment from Archelaus, but had had to lament 3,000 of their coun-

trymen slain by him at the Temple, at his very entrance on power. The people, they said, wished only one thing, deliverance from the Herods, and annexation to Syria. The whole scene of the audience was, erelong, widely reported in Judea, and stamped itself deeply on the national memory, especially the fact that Archelaus, adding the last touch to the humiliation to which both brothers had stooped, threw himself at Cæsar's feet to implore his favour. Many years after, Jesus needed to use no names, in His parable of the pounds, to tell whom He meant, when He spoke of a king, against whom his people clamoured before a foreign throne—"We will not have this man to rule over us."

Archelaus was only in part successful. A few days after the pleadings, from respect to Herod's will, and, doubtless, influenced by a bequest of ten millions of drachmæ in it to himself, a gift equal to about £375,000, besides jewels of gold and silver and very costly garments, to Julia, his wife, Cæsar raised the suppliant from his feet, and appointed him ethnarch of the part of the kingdom left him by Herod; promising to make him king hereafter, if he were found worthy. Idumea, Judea, and Samaria, with the great cities, Jerusalem, Samaria, Cæsarea, and Joppa, were assigned him; but Gaza, Gadara, and Hippos, as Greek cities, were incorporated with the province of Syria. His revenue was the largest, for it amounted to 600 talents, or about £120,000. Antipas had only a third part as much, and Philip only a sixth. The immense sum of money left him by Herod, Cæsar returned to the sons, reserving only a few costly vessels, as mementoes.

While these strange scenes were enacting at Rome, things were going on very badly in Palestine. As soon as Archelaus had sailed, the whole nation was in uproar. The massacre at his accession had been like a spark in explosive air, and the flame of revolt burst out at once. The moment seemed auspicious for the re-erection of the theocracy, with God for the only king, as in early days. The rich, and such as had no higher wish than the material advantages of trade and commerce, which it would bring, desired government by a Roman procurator. They regarded religion, government, law, and constitution, with equal indifference, setting their personal ease and gain before anything else. But for generations, there had been a growing party in the land, whose ideas and aims were very different. From Ezra's time, the dream of a restored theocracy had been cherished, through all the vicissitudes of the nation, with undying tenacity, by a portion of the people. The political system of the Pentateuch was their sacred ideal. Kings over Israel were, in their eyes, usurpers of the rights of Jehovah, against whom Samuel, the great prophet, had, in His name, protested. The heathen could no more be tolerated now than the Canaanites of old, whom God had commanded their fathers to drive out. The land was to be sacred to Jehovah and His people, under a high priesthood only, to the exclusion of all foreign or kingly rule. The impossibility of restoring such a state of things,

after the changes of so many centuries, may have been felt, but was not acknowledged. It stood commanded in the Holy Books, and that was enough. Their fathers had murmured under Persian domination, and had eagerly grasped at the promises of the Greek conqueror, demanding, however, that they should include the safety of their special institutions. When Grecian supremacy, in its turn, became corrupt, and threatened the destruction of the "Law," the "pious" revolted, and fought, under the Maccabees, for the true religion, but still in the form of a theocracy. They continued faithful to the great patriot family, as long as it maintained the high priesthood as the highest dignity of the state, but they had taken up arms only to defend the faith, and as soon as they were able once more to practise its rites, and to give themselves up again to religious study, they forsook the ranks of the Maccabæans, unwilling to take any part in the consolidation of a political power to which they attached no value. In the end, Judas had been well-nigh deserted, and could gather only a handful of 3,000 followers, and his brother, who succeeded him, had to flee, with a remnant of their adherents, to the fens and reed beds of Lake Merom, or the wilds of Gilead. The long peace which prevailed in the reign of John Hyrcanus, after his wars were ended, was devoted by the Rabbis to the creation of the famous "hedge" round the Law, to prevent for ever the religious apostasy and decay which had almost ruined Judaism under the Syro-Greek dynasty. From this time, we hear of the "unsociability" of the Jews towards other nations. Pharisaism, or separation, was erected into a system, and was pushed to its ultimate and most rigorous consequences with a zeal and fanaticism that excite wonder. The extreme party became known as the "Separation," while the courtly party round the king, who were contented to follow the Law as written, conscientiously and rigorously, were called in irony the Saddouk or righteous, or as we call them, the Sadducees.

The indifference of the Pharisaic, or ultra, party to political affairs, and their concentration on the observance and elaboration of the Law, became, in the end, the characteristic of the people at large. During the civil war between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, the two Asmonean brothers, they stood, as much as possible, aloof. The Jew is democratic by nature, and seeks equality, whether under a foreign or native government. "The holy nation," "the kingdom of priests," recognized no other distinction than that of superior piety and knowledge of the Law, which are only personal virtues, and cannot be transmitted. The Asmonean family, once on the throne, lost much of the popular sympathy, and the priestly aristocracy which formed the court, became objects of aversion. From the last years of John Hyrcanus to the death of Jannæus, the Rabbis, living in retirement, attracted to themselves more and more the vital force of the nation; and during the nine sunny years of royal patronage, under Alexandra, instead of busying themselves in heaping up wealth and increasing their power,

they laboured to found a legal system which should secure the triumph of their ideas. Disinterestedness is always attractive, and it had its reward in creating a fanatical devotion to the Rabbis, which knew no limits. "Love work, keep apart from politics, and have nothing to do with office," was the maxim of Schemaiah, the successor of Simeon Ben Schetach. The struggle between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus had no interest to the Pharisees. The Talmud, which embodies Rabbinical feeling, never mentions even the names of any of the five Maccabees—not even that of Judas,—and the spelling and meaning of the word Maccabee were unlike unknown to its compilers. The history of the nation was utterly ignored by these dreamy transcendentalists, who recognized no earthly power whatever.

But even among the Rabbis, and the blindly fanatical people, there was an ultra party of Irreconcilables. From the first, even Rabbinical sternness and strictness were not stern and strict enough for some, and there appeared, at times within the circle of the Rabbis, at others, outside, men of extreme views, who would tolerate no compromises such as the Pharisees were willing to accept. They would acknowledge neither prince nor king, far less any foreign heathen power. Already, in the days of John Hyrcanus, they had begun to mutter discontentedly, and their voices rose louder under Alexander Jannæus, who tried to crush them by the fiercest persecution. But when Pompey came, as conqueror, and arbiter of the national destiny, they once more, by their earnest protests, showed that their party was still vigorous. In the civil wars, many of them fought for the Asmonean princes; but, under Herod, they were so mercilessly held down, that no political action on their part was possible, and they had to devote themselves to the eager study of the Law, which made his reign the Augustan age of Rabbinism. But in their schools they could at least kindle the zeal of the rising youth, and this some of them did only too effectively. Even in the sternest days of Herod's reign, moreover, some had not been wanting to maintain a fierce protest against his usurpation of the throne, which they believed belonged only to God. The so-called robbers crushed by him at Arbela, seem to have been rather patriotic bands, wrong, it may be, in the means pursued, but noble in their aims, who sought to carry out the theocratic dream. The foremost leader of these fierce zealots had been that Hezekiah whom Herod, with much difficulty, had secured and put to death. His son Judas, the Galilæan, was now, in his turn, to raise the standard of national liberty and institutions.

Quintilius Varus, the future victim, with his legions, of Arminius, in Germany—now governor of Syria—had come to Jerusalem, on account of the disturbances at the accession of Archelaus. After some executions, supposing that he had restored order, he returned to Antioch, leaving behind him in Jerusalem, under Sabinus, a whole legion, instead of the garrison that, in peaceful times, would have been thought sufficient. He could hardly have done worse than put

such a man as Sabinus in command, for, like Roman governors in general, in that day, he was a man of no principle, bent only on making a fortune, even by the vilest means, while he had opportunity. He infuriated the Jews, by forcing the surrender of the castles of Jerusalem into his hands, to get possession of Herod's treasures, which he at once appropriated to his own use. Plunder was his one thought, and, to secure it, no act of lawless violence was too audacious. Extortion and robbery drove the people to fury. Not only the city, but the country everywhere, seethed with excitement. It seemed a fitting moment to strike for their long, lost national liberty, and to set up the theocracy again, under the Rabbis, after having driven out the heathen. Their fanaticism knew no caution or prudence, nor any calculation of the odds against them. Miracles would be wrought, if needed, to secure their triumph, and was not the Messiah at hand? It was, moreover, the time of Pentecost, and an immense body of men from Galilee, Idumea, Jericho, and Perea, but, above all, from Judea, taking advantage of the feast, hurried up to Jerusalem to join issue with the greedy robber plundering the city. Dividing themselves into three camps, they forthwith invested the city, and Sabinus, in terror, withdrew to the fort Phasaelis. But the storm soon burst on him. Crowding the roofs of the Temple cloisters, the Jews rained down a storm of missiles on the Roman soldiers sent to dislodge them, till at last these, finding other means useless, fired and nearly destroyed the cloisters,—the dry cedar of the roofs, and the wax in which the plates of gold that covered them were bedded, feeding the flames only too readily. The Temple itself was now at the mercy of the assailants, who avenged themselves by plundering its treasures, Sabinus himself securing 400 talents—about £83,000—for his share. But this only infuriated the people still more, and even Herod's army was so outraged by it, that all the troops, except the Samaritan regiments—numbering 3,000 men—went over to the popular side. Meanwhile, the flame of revolt spread over the whole country. The discharged soldiers of Herod began plundering in Judea, and 2,000 of them got together in Idumea, and fought stoutly against the new king's party, driving Herod's cousin, Achiab, who was sent against them, to take refuge in the fortresses, while they held the open country. Across the Jordan, in Perea, one Simon, who had been a slave of Herod, put himself at the head of a great band, who acknowledged him as king, and doubtless hoped, by his means, to deliver their country, and restore its religious freedom. Betaking themselves to the defile between Jerusalem and Jericho, they burned Herod's palace at the latter city, and carried flame and sword to the homes of all who did not favour them. A corps of Roman soldiers, sent out against Simon, soon, however, scattered his followers, and he himself was slain.

Further north, Athronges, a shepherd of the wild pastures beyond the Jordan, put himself at the head of the popular excitement. He

was a man of great size and strength, and with four brothers, all, like him, of lofty stature, strove in his own wild way to avenge his country. Gathering a vast multitude of followers, he kept up a fierce guerilla warfare against the troops sent out to put him down, and was able to keep the field for years, so well was he supported by the people.

But the most alarming insurrection broke out in Galilee, the old headquarters of the zealots, under Hezekiah, in the last generation. Judas, his son, born on the other side of the Jordan, but known as the Galilæan, had grown to manhood full of the spirit of his father. The same lofty ideal, of restoring the land to God as its rightful king, had become the dream of his life. The time seemed to favour his rising for "God and the Law," as his father, and the heroes of his nation, had done in the past. The brave true-hearted Galilæans, ever ready to fight at the cry that the Law was in danger, rallied round him in great numbers, and at their head he ventured on an enterprise which made him the hero of the day, in every town and village of the land. Sepphoris, a walled hill city, over the hills from Nazareth, was the capital of Galilee, and the great arsenal in the north. This fortress, sitting like a bird, as its name hints, on its height, Judas took by storm, and its capture put in his hands arms of all kinds for thousands, and a large sum of money.

How long he was able to keep the field is not known. The Romans lost no time in taking steps to crush him and the other rebels. Varus, afraid of the safety of the legion he had left in Jerusalem, set off southward from Antioch with two more legions, and four regiments of cavalry, in addition to the auxiliary forces supplied, as was required of them, by the local princes round. As he passed through Berytus, that city added its quota of 1,500 men, and Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, sent him a large contingent of irregulars, in the shape of wild Arab horsemen and foot soldiers. The whole force rendezvoused at Ptolemais, and from this point Varus sent his son, with a strong division, into Galilee, while he himself marched, by way of Esdraelon and Samaria, to Jerusalem. Samaria had been loyal, for it would have been the last thing its citizens would have done to join the hated Jews in a war for their Law, and was left untouched, Varus pitching his camp at a village called Arus, which the Arab auxiliaries set on fire as they left, out of hatred to Herod. As they approached Jerusalem, Emmaus, at which a company of Roman soldiers had been attacked and partly massacred by Athronges, was found deserted, and was burned to the ground, in revenge for the insult that had been offered to the army of Rome. Reaching the neighbourhood of the capital, the besieging force of the Jews at once dispersed, and Varus marched in without a blow. With keen dissimulation, the Jerusalem Jews forthwith laid all the blame of the troubles on the Passover crowds, asserting that they had been as much besieged as Sabinus. Meanwhile, the troops scoured the country for

fugitives, 2,000 of whom were crucified along the roadsides near Jerusalem. A Jewish force of 10,000 men, still afoot, disbanded itself, and the revolt in Judea was for the moment suppressed. Several of the relations of Herod who had taken part in the rising, and had been sent prisoners to Rome, were the last victims for the time.

The force under the son of Varus had meanwhile been busy in the north. Sepphoris was retaken, its inhabitants sold as slaves, and the town itself burned to the ground, but Judas escaped for the present, to begin a still more terrible insurrection a few years later.

Peace was thus, at length, restored, and the young princes entered on their inheritances, thanks, once more, to Rome. But the land had been desolated: the bravest of its youth had died on the battle-field: cities and villages lay smouldering in their ashes. Samaria alone profited by the attempted revolution, for not only did it suffer nothing, a third of its taxes were remitted and laid on Judea—a new ground of hatred towards the "foolish people" of Shechem.

The sensual, lawless, cruel nature of Archelaus, with his want of tact, which, together, had turned both his family and his father's wisest counsellors against him, leave us little doubt of the character of his reign. The general estimate of him was that he was most like his father of all his brothers. He returned from Rome degraded in his own eyes by having had to beg his kingdom on his knees, and by the people, and all his relations, except the just and honourable Philip, having tried to prevent his success with Augustus. His one thought was revenge. Jesus, though an infant when Archelaus began his reign, must have often heard in later years of his journey to Rome and its humiliations, and of the fierce reprisals on his return, for, as I have said, He paints the story unmistakably in the parable of the great man who went into a far country, to receive a kingdom; whose citizens hated him, and sent after him, protesting that they would not have him to reign over them. The fierce revenge of Archelaus could not fail to rise in the minds of those who heard, in the parable, how the lord, on his return, commanded his servants to be called, and rewarded the faithful richly, but stripped the doubtful of everything, and put to death those who had plotted against him.

Archelaus began his reign by such a reckoning with his servants and enemies. When he took possession of his monarchy, says Josephus, he used, not the Jews only, but the Samaritans, barbarously. In Jerusalem he deposed the high priest of the Boëthos family, on the charge of having conspired against him. But though this might have pleased the Pharisees and the people, who counted the Boëthos high priest unclean, he only roused their indignation by filling the office with two of his own creatures in succession. His treatment of his people generally was so harsh, that Jews and Samaritans forgot their mutual hatred in efforts to get him dethroned. His crowning offence, however, was marrying Glaphyra, the widow of his half-brother Alexander, to whom she had borne children. She had

gone back to her father, the friend of Herod and Antony, after the death of her second husband, King Juba, of Libya, when Archelaus met her on his way back from Rome, and falling violently in love with her, married her after divorcing his wife. Her former career in Jerusalem might have made him hesitate to bring her back again, for her haughtiness, keen tongue, and affected contempt for Salome, and Herod's family generally, had been one great cause of her first husband's death, while her training her children, as she did, in heathen manners, had made her hateful to the people. Her incestuous marriage, now, involved both her and Archelaus in the bitterest unpopularity. But she did not live long to trouble any one. It seemed as if the return to the scene of her early marriage life had waked only too vivid recollections of her murdered husband. Soon after it she dreamed that he came to her and accused her of her infidelity to him in marrying Archelaus, and the dream so affected her that she sickened, and in a few days died.

Archelaus had not the same taste for heathen architecture and public games as his father, and, perhaps to his own hurt, was much less an adept at public flattery of the Emperor and his ministers, and he was wise or timid enough to put no heathen or objectionable impress on his coins. At Jericho he rebuilt, with great magnificence, the palace burned down by Simon, and he founded a town on the western hill-slopes of the Jordan valley, in Samaria, calling it Archelaïs, after himself, and embellishing it with fine conduits, to water the palm groves in his gardens, but beyond this he left no monuments of his reign. His time and heart were too much engrossed with vice and drunkenness to leave much interest for anything else.

The hatred of the people and of their leaders, the Pharisees, which had striven to prevent his getting the throne at first, grew only fiercer with time. The struggle continued, with true Jewish pertinacity, for nine years, fanned more or less openly by the ethnarch's relations, and their factions at court. At last, in the beginning of the year 6, things came to a crisis. Judea and Samaria, whom common oppression had, for the moment, made friendly, sent a joint embassy to Rome, to accuse the tyrant, before his master, of having affronted the imperial majesty, by not observing the moderation commanded him. Archelaus was thoroughly alarmed. Superstitious, like his dead wife, he dreamed that he saw ten ears of wheat, perfectly ripe, presently eaten by oxen, and at once taking the dream as an omen, was told by one Simon, an Essene, that the ten heads of wheat were ten years, and marked the length of his reign. Such a forecast was only too easy. The embassy to Rome had done its work. Cæsar was indignant, and ordered the agent of Archelaus at Rome, a man of the same name, to sail at once for Palestine, and summon his master to appear at Rome. Five days after the dream the messenger reached Jerusalem, and found Archelaus feasting with his friends. The imperative summons brooked no delay, and the vassal instantly set out for Italy,

There his fate was speedily decided. Accusers and accused were brought face to face, and Archelaus was sentenced to perpetual banishment, and the confiscation of all his property to the Emperor. The place of his exile was fixed at Vienna, in Gaul, a town on the Rhone, a little south of the modern Lyons, in what, long afterwards, became the province of Dauphiné. Here he lived in obscurity till his death, amid the vines of southern France, perhaps a wiser and happier man than in the evil years of his greatness. His reign was the beginning of the end of Herod's kingdom, his dominions being forthwith incorporated with Syria, as part of that Roman province. The wish of the Jews was at last gratified, but they were soon to feel how bitterly they had deceived themselves in supposing that incorporation with Rome meant religious independence. The castle at Jericho, and the palm groves and buildings of Archelaïs, were the only memorials of the ethnarch, except the bitterness written on every heart by his cruelties and oppressions.

A man of unspeakably greater importance in his influence on the nation—Hillel, the gentle, the godly, the scholar of Ezra, appears to have passed away in these last months of excitement, at the age, it is said, of 120. Born among the Dispersion, in Babylon, he had come to Jerusalem, long years before, to attend the famous schools of Abtalion and Schemaiah, which Herod's proscriptions would have well-nigh crushed in later years, destroying Rabbinism with them, but for the genius who had been trained in their spirit. Already a married man, he had no income but the daily pittance of half a denarius, earned as a light porter or day labourer, though his one brother was a great Rabbi and president of the school at Babylon, and his other was growing to be a wealthy man in Jerusalem. But the rich one did not trouble himself about him, and affected to despise him, and the other, though eminent, was, very likely, himself poor. Unable, one day, to pay the trifling fee for entrance, to the doorkeeper of the school, Hillel was yet determined to get the knowledge for which his soul thirsted. It was a Sabbath eve in winter, and the classes met on the Friday evening, continuing through the night, till the Sabbath morning. To catch the instruction from which he was shut out, Hillel climbed into a window outside, and sat there, in the cold, for it was bitter weather, and snow was falling heavily. In the morning, says the tradition, Schemaiah said to Abtalion: "Brother Abtalion, it is usually light in our school by day; it must be cloudy this morning to be so dark." As he spoke he looked up, and saw a form in the window outside. It was Hillel, buried in the snow and almost dead. Carrying him in, bathing and rubbing him with oil, and setting him near the hearth, he gradually revived. "It was right even to profane the Sabbath for such an one," said the teachers and students.

Five or six years after the beginning of Herod's reign, Hillel rose to be the head of the Rabbinism of Jerusalem, as the only man to be

found who had studied under Abtalion and Schemaiah. After a time a rival school rose under Schammai. Hillel, though a strict Jew, had still a leaning to charitable and liberal ideas in some directions; Schammai was the embodiment of the narrow ultra-Pharisaic spirit, and, as such, much more numerously followed than his milder rival. Hillel's weakness, as well as strength, lay in his love of peace, for he too often gave up principle to maintain quiet. Many of his sayings are preserved, but most of them are inferior to those left by Epictetus or Seneca. His summary of the Law, to a heathen, is the best known,—"What you would yourself dislike, never do to your neighbour—that is the whole Law, all else is only its application." But, like all the Rabbis, his religious system was radically unsound. Its central principle was the belief in strict retaliation or recompense, for every act. Like for like was the sum of his morality. Seeing a human skull floating on a stream, Hillel cried out, "Because thou hast drowned (some one), thou thyself art drowned, and he who has drowned thee will himself some day also be drowned." The same way, he believed, would it be at the final judgment. "He who has gained (the knowledge of) the Law," said he, "has also gained the life to come." Service and payment, his fundamental motive to right action, inevitably led to formalism and selfish calculation, fatal to all real merit.

The banishment of Archelaus found Jesus a growing boy of about ten or twelve, living quietly in the Galilæan Nazareth, among the hills. It was a momentous event in the declining fortunes of the nation, for its results presently filled the land with terror, and paved the way for the final crisis, sixty years later, which destroyed Israel as a nation.

The troubles of Herod's time, and the dreams of the Rabbis, had excited a very general desire, at his death, for direct government by Rome, under the proconsul of Syria. The deputation sent to Augustus, when Archelaus was seeking the throne, had prayed for such an arrangement, thinking they would be left under their high priests, to manage their national affairs after their own customs, as the Phenician cities were allowed to do under their Archons, and that Rome would only interfere in taxation and military matters. Their wish, however, was the only ground of their expectation, for Rome never left large communities like the Jewish nation thus virtually independent, though they might indulge towns or cities with such a privilege.

When Archelaus, at the entreaty of the people, had been banished, their hopes revived of the restoration of the theocracy under the high priests and the Rabbis, with a nominal supremacy on the part of Rome. The exile of the tyrant, therefore, was greeted with universal joy; but the news that a procurator, or lieutenant-governor, as he might be called, had been appointed in his stead, and that Judea was henceforth to be incorporated into the province of Syria, with its pro-

consul, or governor-general, as supreme head, under the Emperor, soon dispelled their dreams of theocratic liberty.

The proconsul, or governor-general, of Syria, at the time, was Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, a brave soldier, and faithful servant of the Emperor, accustomed to command and to be obeyed. Ordered to incorporate Judea with his province, no thought of consulting Jewish feelings in doing so crossed his mind. From comparative obscurity he had risen, through military and diplomatic service, till Augustus had him made consul. He had made a successful campaign in Asia Minor, against some tribes of savage mountaineers, whom he succeeded in subduing, by blockading the mountain passes, and after starving them into submission, had secured their future quiet by carrying off all the men able to bear arms, banishing some, and drafting the rest into his legions. For this he had gained the honour of a triumph. When Caius, the young grandson of Augustus, was treacherously wounded in Armenia, he had managed affairs for him so much to the satisfaction of the Emperor, that he got the province of Syria as a reward. With all this, he bore a bad character with those who knew him, or were any way under him, as not only malignant and grasping, but mean and revengeful. As a proof of this it was instanced, that he kept a charge of attempted poisoning over his wife's head, for twenty years after he had divorced her.

The procurator, or lieutenant-governor, appointed over Judea by Quirinius, was Coponius, a Roman knight, unknown except from this office. He and Quirinius made their appearance in Jerusalem together, as soon as Archelaus had been condemned, to take possession of his effects for Augustus. They lodged in the palace of Herod, which, henceforth, was called the Prætorium, and became the residence of the procurators when they were in Jerusalem at the time of the feasts, for, except then, they lived in Cæsarea. The Herod family had to content themselves with the old castle of the Maccabæan kings, near the Xystus.

Any golden dreams of a restored theocracy were soon dispelled. Hardly had the inventory of the possessions of the crown been finished, than Quirinius announced that his next duty was to take a census of the people, and a return of their property and incomes, as the basis for introducing the Roman taxation common to all subject provinces of the empire. There could be no clearer proof that the nation had deceived itself. Rich and poor alike resented a measure which announced slavery instead of freedom, and ruinous extortion instead of prosperity. In every country the introduction of a new fiscal system, with its intrusion into private affairs, its vexatious interferences with life and commerce, its new and untried burdens, and the general disturbance of the order of things which custom has made familiar, is always unpopular. But in this case patriotic and religious feeling intensified the dislike. It was at once the direct and formal subjection of the country to heathen government, the abrogation of

laws with which religious ideas were blended, and the fancied profanation of the word of Jehovah and of His prophets, that Israel would be as the sand on the sea-shore, *which cannot be numbered*. It was recalled to mind, moreover, that when the wrath of God turned against Israel, He moved David to give the command, "Go number Israel and Judah." It ran also from mouth to mouth that old prophecies foretold that the numbering of the people would be the sign of their approaching fall as a nation. To the fanaticism of the Jew the census was a matter of life and death; to Quirinius, who could not comprehend such a state of feeling, it was the simplest matter in the world. The very first step in the Roman government of Judea brought it into conflict with the people.

The systematic and direct taxation of the country by Rome was, from this time, an inextinguishable subject of hatred and strife between the rulers and the ruled. The Romans smiled at the political economy of the Rabbis, who gravely levied a tax of half a shekel a head to the Temple, to avert a national pestilence, and proposed that a census of the people, calculated by the number of the lambs slaughtered in Jerusalem at the last Passover, should be the basis of the imperial fiscal registration. But if this was ridiculous to the Roman, it was a matter so sacred to the Jew, that it led to ever fresh revolts, after thousands of patriots had died to maintain it. The Jewish law recognized taxes and free gifts only for religious objects, and, according to the Rabbis, the very holiness of the land rested on every field and tree contributing its tithe, or gift of wood, to the Temple. How, it was asked, could this sacredness be maintained, if a heathen emperor received taxes from the sources consecrated by these tithes and gifts to Jehovah? Hence the question rose, "whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not?"—a question to be solved only by the sword, but rising ever again, after each new despairing attempt at resistance. Every "receipt of custom" at the gate of a town, or at the end of a bridge, was a rock against which the Jew who honoured the Law felt his conscience wrecked, or a battle-field marked by a deadly strife.

This sullen antipathy to imperial taxation was, moreover, intensified by the evils of the Roman system. The chief imposts demanded were two—a poll and a land tax, the former an income tax on all not embraced by the latter. The income tax was fixed by a special census, and was rated, in Syria and Cilicia, at one per cent. All landed property of private individuals was subject to the ground tax, while the Jewish ground possessions were confiscated entirely to the imperial exchequer. The tax amounted to a tenth of all grain, and a fifth part of wine and fruit, and was thus very oppressive. Both imposts were in the hands of "publicans," who bought the right of collecting the taxes for five years, from the censors at Rome. These publicani farmed the revenue from the State, giving security for the payment of a fixed sum for the province whose taxes they bought.

There were, however, extraordinary taxes and local imposts, besides the two great ones. If corn ran short in Italy the provinces had to supply it at fixed prices, and the procurator at Cæsarea had the right to demand for himself and his attendants what supplies he required.

The customs and excise duties, moreover, were levied for the imperial government,—and the tolls on bridges, and roads, the octroi at the gates of towns, and the custom-houses at the boundaries of districts or provinces, which, also, were farmed by the publicani, gave additional room for arbitrary oppression. The whole system was radically bad, like its counterparts under the Ancien Régime in France, and in Turkey, now. The Roman knights who took contracts for provinces, sub-let them, by districts, to others, and these again had sub-contractors to smaller and smaller amounts. The worst result was inevitable where self-interest was so deeply involved. Each farmer and sub-farmer of the revenue required a profit, which the helpless provincials had, in the end, to pay. The amount assessed by Rome was thus no measure of the ultimate extortion. The greed and opportunity of the collectors, in each descending grade, alone determined the demand from the taxpayer.

Nor was there a remedy. The publicani were mostly Roman knights, the order from which the judges were chosen. They were the capitalists of the empire, and formed companies to take up the larger contracts, and these companies, like some even in the present day, were more concerned about the amount of their dividends than the means of obtaining them. Complaints could only be laid before an official who might himself intend to farm the same taxes at a future time, or who was a partner in the company that farmed them at the moment. Thus safe from the law, the oppression and extortion practised by the collectors were intolerable. The rural population were especially ground down by their exactions. A favourite plan was to advance money to those unable to pay demands, and thus make the borrowers private debtors, whose whole property was ereleong confiscated by the usurious interest required.

Cæsar has left us a vivid picture of the fate of a Roman province in matters of taxation. Speaking of Pius Scipio, the proconsul of Syria in B.C. 48, he tells us that he made large requisitions of money on the towns, and exacted from the farmers of the taxes the amount of two years' payment, then due to the Roman treasury, and also demanded as a loan the sum which would be due for the next year. All this extortion, we may be sure, would have to be more than made up by the unfortunate provincials. Having brought his troops to Pergamum, one of the chief cities of the province of Asia, he quartered them for the winter in the richest cities, and quieted their discontent by great bounties, and by giving up the towns to them to plunder.

The money requisitions levied by him on the province were exacted with the utmost severity, and many devices were invented to satisfy the proconsul's rapacity. A head tax was imposed on all, both slave

and free: taxes were laid on columns and doors; corn, soldiers, arms, rowers, military engines and conveyances, were taken by requisition. If anything could be thought of as a pretext for a new tax, the tax was imposed. Men with military authority were set over cities, and even over small villages and petty fortified places; and he who used his power most harshly and remorselessly, was thought the best man and the best citizen. The province was full of lictors and bailiffs; it swarmed with officials and extortioners, who demanded more than was due for the taxes, as gain for themselves. In addition to all this, enormous interest was asked, as is usual in time of war, from all who had to borrow, which many needed to do, as the taxes were levied on all. Nor did these exactions save the Roman citizens of the province, for additional fixed sums were levied on the several communes, and on the separate towns. Cicero, on his entry on the proconsulate of Cilicia, found things equally sad in that province. He tells us that he freed many cities from the most crushing taxation, and from ruinous usury, and even from debts charged against them falsely. The province had been nearly ruined by the oppressions and rapacity of his predecessor, whose conduct, he says, had been monstrous, and more like that of a savage wild beast than a man. Such pictures, by Romans themselves, leave us to imagine the misery of the wretched provincials under proconsuls and procurators, and account in no small degree for the recklessness of Judea under the Roman yoke.

Jesus grew up to manhood amidst universal murmurs against such a system, the discontent becoming more serious year by year. At last the Senate, on the recommendation of the Emperor Tiberius, sent Germanicus, the Emperor's nephew, to Syria, as a necessary step towards calming the popular excitement. The Jews had already sent a deputation to Rome, to represent the ruin brought on their country by the crushing weight of the taxes. The deepening exhaustion of Palestine by the fiscal oppression of the Romans, and of Herod's family, is incidentally implied in many passages of the Gospels. One of the most frequent allusions in Christ's discourses is to the debtor, the creditor, and the prison. The blind misrule that was slowly destroying the empire fell with special weight on an agricultural people like the Jews. In one parable, Jesus represents every one but the king as bankrupt. The steward owes the king, and the servant owes the steward. The question what they should eat and what they should drink is assumed as the most pressing, with the common man. The creditor meets the debtor in the street, and straightway commits him to prison, till he pay the uttermost farthing, and, if that fails, sells him, his wife, his children, and all that he has, to make up his debt. Oil and wheat, the first necessaries of life, are largely claimed by the rich man's steward. Buildings have to be left unfinished for want of means. The merchant invests his money, to make it safe, in a single pearl, which he can easily hide. Many bury their money in the ground, to save it from the oppressor. Speculators keep back

their grain from the market, and enlarge their barns. Instead of a field which needed the plough, the spade suffices. "What shall I do?" says the ruined householder, "I cannot dig, I am ashamed to beg." In the train of scarcity of money comes the usurer, who alone is prosperous, speedily increasing his capital five or even ten times. This state of things is constantly assumed in the Gospels, and it grew worse and worse through the whole life of our Lord, culminating in a great financial crisis, throughout the empire, a few years after the Crucifixion.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROMAN PROCURATORS.

THE material ruin which Rome had brought on the land, naturally increased the prevailing excitement, and the bands of fierce religionists which lurked in the hill-country constantly received additions from those whom the evil times had beggared. The popular mind was kept in permanent agitation by some tale of insult to the Law on the part of the Romans. At one time they had "defiled the feasts," at another, a military standard had been shown in Jerusalem, or a heathen emblem brought into the Temple, or a votive tablet set up on Mount Zion, or a heathen sculpture had been discovered on some new public building. Real or imagined offences were never wanting. Now, it was heard, with horror, that a procurator had plundered the Temple treasures; then, a Roman soldier had torn a copy of the Law; or a heathen had passed into the forbidden court of the Temple, or some Gentile child, in his boyish sport, had mocked some Jew. The most trifling rumours or incidents became grave from the passion they excited, and the hundreds or thousands of lives lost in the tumults they kindled. The heart of the whole country glowed at white heat, and ominous flashes continually warned Cæsar of the catastrophe approaching.

The excitement caused by the inquisitorial census of persons and property by Quirinius was intense. Herod and Archelaus had been careful to avoid direct similarity to the Temple tenth in their taxation, and possibly it was because the revenue had to be raised in any circuitous way, to prevent collision with the popular prejudices, that the imposts these princes had levied—tolls, house tax, excise, market tax, head tax, salt tax, crown tax, and custom dues,—had pressed on the nation so heavily. Augustus had waived the introduction of the Roman modes of taxation, from similar motives of prudence, and Herod, while he had taxed produce, took care to avoid requiring a tenth. But Quirinius had no such scruples, and at once kindled the fiercest resistance. The whole nation saw in the tithe on grain, and the two tenths on wine and fruit, an encroachment on the rights of Jehovah. A leading Rabbi—Zadok—headed the opposition in his

class, and joined Judas, the Galilæan, who again appeared in the field, calling on all to take arms. The Rabbis inveighed against the proposals of Quirinius, but he cared nothing for their theology, and as he had broken the mountaineers of Cilicia by starvation, he felt no doubt that he could keep order, in spite of resistance, among the Jews. Ambition, love of money, and military rule, were the only thought of the rough, coarse soldier.

At first it seemed as if he would succeed. The high priest, Joazer, a Herodian of the house of Boëthos, openly took his side, and persuaded the people in Jerusalem to let the census and registration go on quietly. The Rabbis temporized, and seemed inclined to take the safer side. But this did not content the whole body. The more determined were weary of the endless discussions and trifling of the Synagogue, and broke away from their brethren, to found a new school—that of the "Zealots"—which henceforth carried in its hand the fate of the nation. The fanatics of Judaism—their one sleepless thought was war with Rome. They were the counterparts and representatives of the stern puritans of the Maccabæan times, and took their name, as well as their inspiration, from the words of the dying Mattathias—"Be ZEALOTS, my sons, for the Law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers." The exhortations of their brethren, to submit quietly to the government, were answered in the words of the early patriots—"Whoever takes on him the yoke of the Law is no longer under that of man, but he who casts off the Law, has man's yoke laid on him." Thus, the foreboding that this numbering of the people, like that of David, would bring death in its train, was not unaccomplished. The fierce ruin broke forth from Gamala, on the Sea of Gennesareth, a district in which the census was not to be taken; and the destroying angel who passed through the land was Judas the Galilæan.

Judas is one of those ideal forms which have an abiding influence on the imagination: an enthusiast, raised above all calculations of prudence or possibility, but so grand in his enthusiasm, that, while he failed utterly in his immediate aim, he more than triumphed in the imperishable influence of his example. He was the first of the stern Irreconcilables of his nation, and from his initiative sprang the fierce and pitiless fanatics whose violence led, two generations later, to the frightful excesses of the great revolt, and to the ruin of the nation. The cry which drew round him the youth of the country, had been, in part, the inarticulate longing of countless noble souls, though mingled with a spirit of proscription they would have repudiated. "No Lord but Jehovah: no tax but to the Temple: no friend but a Zealot." It was idolatry to pay homage to Cæsar; idolatry to pay dues to a heathen government; it was defilement of what was pure, to give tithes or custom from it to the Unclean, and he who demanded them was the enemy of God, and of Israel, worthy of double punishment if a Jew. War with Rome, and with their brethren willing to

live at peace with it, were alike proclaimed. Fire and sword wasted the land. The country house of the rich Sadducee, and the ricks and barns of the well-to-do friend of Rome, everywhere went up in flames, at the first conflict of the rude but fiercely brave patriots with the Roman soldiery. Like our own Fifth Monarchy men, they believed that the kingdom of God could be set up only by the sword. In the stern spirit of the Old Testament, they thought only of hewing Agag in pieces before the Lord, believing themselves God's instruments to rid the land of His enemies, who were, in effect, in their view, all but themselves and their supporters. He was a jealous God, who would suffer no other lords in His inheritance, and His will was a war of extermination on the heathen invaders, like that of Joshua against the Canaanites.

From the Nazareth hills, Jesus, as a growing boy, saw, daily, the smoke of burning villages, and in Joseph's cottage, as in all others in the land, every heart beat thick, for long weeks, at the hourly news of some fresh story of blood. But the insurrection was, erelong, suppressed: Judas dying in the struggle. The terrible story, however, was never forgotten. Many years after, Gamaliel could remind the authorities how "the Galilæan drew away much people after him, but perished, and as many as obeyed him were dispersed." Even the Romans learned a lesson, and never attempted another census; the proconsul, Cestius Gallus, even so late as the reign of Nero, being content to reckon in the Jewish manner, by the number of Passover lambs. To the people at large, Judas and his sons were a new race of Maccabæan heroes, for the sons—Jacobus, Simon, Menahem, and Eleazar, in after years, carried out the work of their father with a splendid devotion. None of the four died in bed. They either fell in battle against Rome, or by their own hand, to prevent their being taken alive. When all Judea had been lost but the rock of Masada, it was a grandson of Judas who was in command of that last citidel of his race, and boasted to his comrades that as his family were the first who rose against the heathen, so they were the last who continued to fight against them, and it was he, who, when all hope had perished, slew, by their own consent, the 900 men who were shut up with him, and set the fortress in flames, that Rome might find nothing over which to triumph but ashes and corpses. The grand self-immolation of Judas became a deathless example, and kept Rome uneasy for seventy years, nor is Josephus wrong in saying that though the insurrection lasted hardly two months, it kindled a spirit which reduced Palestine to a desert, destroyed the Temple, and scattered Israel over the earth. Galilee and Judea never showed their lofty idealism more strikingly than in producing such leaders, or in continuing to believe in them after their disastrous end.

Meanwhile Quirinius had gained his point in a measure, and the poll and ground taxes were imposed on the Roman plan, by the close of the year. But nothing was done to lighten the previous burdens,

of which the house and market taxes, especially, were hateful to the people. The fiscal result, however, was far below Roman expectations. Although Herod had been regarded as the richest king of the East, the estimate forwarded by Quirinius to the Emperor, of the value of all the taxes, amounted to less than a twelfth part of the sum derived from Egypt. The computation was sent for each tax, that Augustus might sanction it, and let it be put up for sale to the publicani.

The opposition to this heathen taxation, though thus outwardly suppressed, was only nursed the more closely in the hearts of all. The Rabbis still taught that the land was defiled by dues paid to a heathen emperor, and attributed every real or fancied natural calamity to the displeasure of the Almighty for their being so. "Since the purity of the land was destroyed," said they, "even the flavour and smell of the fruit are gone." The Roman tithe soon told fatally on that which had hitherto been paid to the Temple, and this the Rabbis especially resented. "Since the tithes are no longer regularly paid," said they, "the yield of the fields has grown less." Hence the question constantly passed from mouth to mouth, not whether the Roman tax should be paid, but whether it was lawful at all to pay it.

The hatred and contempt for those of their countrymen who, under such circumstances, took service under the associations of publicani farming the odious taxes, as collectors, may be imagined. The bitter relentless contempt and loathing towards them knew no bounds. As the Greeks spoke of "tax-gatherers and sycophants," the Jews had always ready a similarly odious association of terms, such as "tax-gatherers and sinners," "tax-gatherers and heathen," "tax-gatherers and prostitutes," "tax-gatherers, murderers, and highway robbers," in speaking of them. Driven from society, the local publicans became more and more the Pariahs of the Jewish world. The Pharisee stepped aside with pious horror, to avoid breathing the air poisoned with the breath of the lost son of the House of Israel, who had sold himself to a calling so infamous. The testimony of a publican was not taken in a Jewish court. It was forbidden to sit at table with him, or to eat his bread. The gains of the class were the ideal of uncleanness, and were especially shunned, every piece of their money serving to mark a religious offence. To change coin for them, or to accept alms from them, defiled a whole household, and demanded special purifications. Only the dregs of the people would connect themselves with a calling so hated. Cast out by the community, they too often justified the bad repute of their order, and lived in reckless dissipation and profligacy. To revenge themselves for the hatred shown them, their only thought, not seldom, was to make as much as they could from their office. The most shameless imposition at the "receipts of custom," and the most hardened recklessness in the collection of excessive or fraudulent charges, became a daily occurrence. They repaid the war against themselves by a war against the community.

Amidst such a state of feeling between rulers and ruled, Jesus grew up to manhood and spent His life. The sleepy East could not endure the systematic and restless ways of the West, now forced upon it, and, still less, the regular visit of the tax-gatherer, especially under such a vicious system as that of Rome. War, as far as possible, became the chronic state of things, if not in the open field, yet in never-ending, ever-beginning resistance, all over the land. Even the mild school of Hillel justified the use of any means of escape from the robbery of the "publicans," and the Rabbis a large made the subject a standing topic in their schools. Controversies sprang up in connection with it. The Irreconcilables, as I may call the Zealots, could not brook even the slightconcessions to Rome of the hitherto popular Pharisees. It was made a matter of reproach to them that they put the name of the Emperor along with that of Moses in letters of divorce, and the dispute was ended only by Hillel's party reminding its opponents that this was already sanctioned by Scripture itself, which allowed the name of Pharoah to stand beside that of Jehovah.

Before Quirinius left Jerusalem, he made one concession to the people, by sacrificing to their hatred the instrument of his tyranny—the High Priest, Joazar. After helping to get the census carried out, and thus losing all popular respect, the time-serving priest was stripped of his dignity by the master who had despised even while he made use of him, and it was given to Annas, the son of Seth, in whose family it was held, at intervals, for over fifty years. But though his house was thus permanently ennobled, its taking office under the Romans, no less than its belonging to the party of the Sadducees, made it, henceforth, of no weight in the destiny of the nation. The Zealots were steadily rising to be a great party in the land. The noblest spirits flocked to their banner most readily, as we may judge when we remember that one of the Apostles had been a Zealot, and that the young Saul also joined them. The young men, especially, swelled their numbers. "Our youth," laments Josephus, "brought the State to ruin, by their fanatical devotion to the ferocious creed this party adopted." Its principles were, indeed, destructive of all government, as things were. "He who was under the Law," it was held, "was free from all other authority." Its members were pledged to honour Jehovah alone as King of Israel, and neither to shrink from death for themselves nor from the murder of their nearest kin, if it promised to serve the cause of liberty, as they understood it. The family of the fallen Judas remained at the head of these fierce patriots. Two of his sons were afterwards crucified for raising an insurrection, and while his third son, Menahem, by the taking of Masada, was the first to begin the final war against Florus, his grandson, Eleazar, was the last who fought against the Romans, burying himself, as has been told, and the wreck of the Zealots, beneath the ruins of the fortress, rather than surrender. It is note-

worthy, moreover, that from the date of the census, no part of Palestine was less safe than that which was directly under Roman authority. If the traveller between Jericho and Jerusalem fell among robbers, what must have been the danger in the lonely and desolate valleys beyond Hebron?

The first seven years after the annexation were, notwithstanding, comparatively happy times for the Jews. Augustus made it his maxim to spare rather than destroy the provinces, so far as he could safely do so; and he furthered this policy by frequent change of the procurators. As to the burning religious questions raised by the decay of heathenism, and the spread of Eastern religions in the empire, he took, by advice of Mæcenas, a middle course. He supported the Roman religion, but, at the same time, protected the special faith of each country. Hence, although he personally despised foreign religions, and offered no sacrifices when in Jerusalem, even while asking with interest about the Jewish God, and though he praised his grandson, the young Caius Cæsar, for passing through Jerusalem like a Roman, without making an offering, yet, like Cæsar and Cicero, elsewhere, he would by no means do any violence to the Jewish religion. On the contrary, he yielded to the wish of Herod by taking the Jews of the Dispersion under his protection, as Cæsar had done, and sanctioned the remittance of the Temple money from all parts. Besides this, he acted with the greatest consideration towards the Jews in Rome; for since the campaigns of Pompey and Gabinius, they had been so numerous in the capital that they formed a great "quarter" on the farther side of the river. Treating them as clients of Cæsar, he acted with marked thoughtfulness in all connected with their religion, their morals, or their prosperity. He formally sanctioned the Jewish Council in Alexandria, and, after the annexation of Judea, he ordered a permanent daily sacrifice of an ox and two lambs to be offered at his expense, and, in conjunction with the Empress Livia, and other members of his house, sent gifts of precious jars and vessels for the use of the drink-offering.

This policy was not without its effect. Augustus got the fame in Rome of being the patron of the Jews, and in the provinces, even among the Jews themselves, of being the magnanimous protector of their religion. His tolerance, moreover, served an end which he did not contemplate. It secured the slow but certain conquest of the West, first by Judaism, the pioneer of a new and higher faith, and then by Christianity—the faith for which it had prepared the way.

But, in spite of every desire on the part of Augustus to humour their peculiarities, the Jews were still in a state of chronic excitement. The Samaritans seeing their opportunity, raised their heads more boldly. They were no longer dependent on Jerusalem, since the banishment of Archelaus. Their elders rejoiced in political consequence long denied them. But the light and giddy people under them could not make a right use of liberty. Under Coponius,

the first procurator after Archelaus was deposed, it was discovered that they had defiled the Temple at Jerusalem on the night before the Passover. The Temple doors, as was the custom, had been opened at midnight, before the feast, and some Samaritans, knowing this, and having previously smuggled themselves into Jerusalem, had crept up to the Temple in the darkness, and strewed human bones in the courts, so that the high priest Hannas had to turn away from the polluted sanctuary the worshippers who in the morning thronged the gates. Nothing remained for the vast multitudes but to go back embittered to their homes, leaving the Temple to be purified, but nothing is said of any punishment of the Samaritans. The procurator seems only to have told the Jews that they should have kept a better watch.

Little is known of the two procurators—Marcus Ambivius and Annius Rufus, who followed Coponius—except that Judea, exhausted by its burdens, implored their diminution, and that, under the first, Salome, Herod's sister, died, while Augustus, himself, died under the second.

The new emperor, Tiberius, on his accession, sent a fresh procurator, Valerius Gratus, whom, with his dislike of change, he retained in office for eleven years. Under him things went from bad to worse. During his period of office he changed the high priests five times, deposing Hannas, and giving the office alternately to one of his family, and to a rival house of the small band of Sadducean Temple nobility. Large sums no doubt filled his coffers at each transaction, but such a degradation of their highest dignitaries must have exasperated the Jews to the quick. After the crafty Hannas came, as his successor, one Ismael, but his reign was only one year long. Hannas' son, Eleazer, next won the pontifical mitre for a year, then came Simon, but he, too, had to make way for a successor, Caiaphas, son-in-law of Hannas, afterwards the judge of Jesus. Simon is famous in Rabbinical annals for a misfortune that befell him in the night, before the Day of Atonement. To while away the long hours, during which he was not permitted to sleep, he amused himself by conversation with an Arab sheikh, but, to his dismay, the heathen, in his hasty utterance, let a speck of spittle fall on the priestly robe, and thus made its wearer unclean, so that his brother had to take his place in the rites of the approaching day. Changes so violent and corrupt had at last degraded the high priesthood so much, in the eyes of all, that the deposed Hannas, rather than his successors, was still regarded as the true high priest.

Meanwhile, the load of the public taxes became so unendurable that a deputation was sent to Rome in the year 17, to entreat some alleviation of the misery. Syria as a whole, indeed, seemed on the brink of an insurrection, from the oppression of the publicans. Germanicus, the Emperor's nephew, one of the noblest men of his day, was sent to the East to quiet the troubles; but, unfortunately, with him was sent,

as Governor-General of Syria, Cneius Piso, his deadly enemy, who soon involved him in personal disputes that well-nigh excited a war between them. Tiberius, able and cautious, and not yet fallen to the hatefulness of his later years, saw no remedy for the state of things but in prolonging the reign of the procurators. "Every office," he was wont to say, "induces greed, and if the holder enjoy it only for a short time, without knowing at what moment he may have to surrender it, he will naturally plunder his subjects to the utmost, while he can. If, on the other hand, he hold it for a lengthened term, he will grow weary of oppression, and become moderate as soon as he has extorted for himself what he thinks enough." "On one of my campaigns," he would add, by way of illustration, "I came upon a wounded soldier, lying on the road, with swarms of flies in his bleeding flesh. A comrade, pitying him, was about to drive them off, thinking him too weak to do it himself. But the wounded man begged him rather to let them alone, 'for,' said he, 'if you drive these flies away you will do me harm instead of good. They are already full, and do not bite me as they did, but if you frighten them off, hungry ones will come in their stead, and suck the last drop of blood from me.'" The heartless cynic in the purple had no pity, and was far enough from a thought of playing the Good Samaritan, by binding up the wounds of any of the races under him, far less those of the hated Jews. In Rome itself he treated them with the bitterest harshness, and his example reacted on those in Palestine. In the year 19 he drove the Jews out of Rome. "Four thousand freedmen infected with this superstition" (Judaism), says Tacitus, "being able to carry arms, were shipped off to the island of Sardinia to put down the robber hordes. If they perished from the climate it was little loss. The rest were required to leave Italy, if they did not forswear their unholy customs by a certain day." Suetonius says that Tiberius even compelled them to burn their sacred robes and utensils, but Josephus boasts that those drafted into the legions preferred dying as martyrs, to breaking the Law.

In Judea, these measures were attributed to the influence of the hated favourite of Tiberius, Sejanus. It was, doubtless, with no little alarm that the news came in the year 26, when the influence of Sejanus was at its height, that Valerius Gratus had at length been recalled, and Pontius Pilate appointed in his stead. The client was worthy of the patron. Venal, covetous, cruel, even to delighting in blood, without principle or remorse, and yet wanting decision at critical moments, his name soon became specially infamous in Judea. He bore himself in the most offensive way towards the people of Jerusalem. The garrison of Antonia had hitherto always left the ornaments of their military standards at the headquarters in Cæsarea, since the Jews would not suffer the Holy City to be profaned by the presence of the eagles and the busts of the emperors, of which they mainly consisted. But Pilate, apparently on the first

change of the garrison, ordered the new regiments to enter the city by night with the offensive emblems on their standards, and Jerusalem awoke to see idolatrous symbols planted within sight of the Temple. Universal excitement spread through the city, and the Rabbis and people took mutual counsel how the outrage could be removed. The country soon began to pour in its multitudes. The violent party counselled force, but the more sensible prevailed as yet, and a multitude of the citizens hurried off to Pilate at Cæsarea, to entreat him to take away the cause of such bitter offence. But Pilate would not listen, and treated the request as an affront to the Emperor. Still the crowds continued their appeal. For five days and five nights they beset the palace of Herod in which Pilate resided, raising continually the same cry, that the standards might be removed. Determined to end the matter, he at last summoned them to meet him on the seventh day in the circus. Meanwhile, he had filled the spaces round the arena with soldiers, and when the Jews began to raise their mutinous cries again, on his refusing to yield, he ordered the troops to enter with drawn swords. But he had miscounted their fanatical earnestness. Baring their throats, and kneeling as if to meet the sword, the multitude cried out that they would rather part with their life than their law. Pilate, dreading the anger of the Emperor if he commanded a wholesale massacre, had to yield, and the standards were withdrawn from Jerusalem.

The power of Pilate over the people was henceforth broken. They had conquered his will by stronger wills of their own. From this time they knew how to extort concessions from him. Persistent clamour, that would take no refusal, was, henceforward, their most trusted reliance, as we see only too strikingly in the last hours of Jesus. But Pilate could not learn by any lesson, however severe. Furious at his defeat, he resolved to hide it by a fresh innovation, which he fancied he could carry out. The Rabbis had contended that their law did not allow the setting up of images, but there seemed nothing to prevent votive tablets being set up in Jerusalem, like those dedicated to the Emperor by other officials. He, therefore, hung up golden shields of this kind on the palace on Mount Zion, where he lived, inscribed simply with his own name and that of Tiberius. A terrible commotion was the result. At the next feast, the Jews, with the four sons of Herod, Philip, Antipas, Herod Boëthos, and Phasael, at their head, declared that such symbols, which were equivalent to altars, were less endurable than the emblems on the standards. "Cease," cried they, as he fiercely dismissed them, "to stir up war and commotion. The Emperor is not honoured by insults offered to the Law. It is the will of Tiberius that our laws shall be respected, but if not, show us the edict, or new rescript, which says otherwise, that we may send an embassy respecting it to him." Pilate trembled when he heard of a complaint to Tiberius, for he was afraid, as Philo tells us, that a deputation to Rome would reveal all his crimes, "the venality

of his sentences, his rapacity, his having ruined whole families, and all the shameless deeds he had done, the numerous executions he had ordered, of persons who had not been condemned by any tribunal, and the excess of cruelties of every kind committed by him." He had gone too far, however, to retreat, and had to leave matters to the decision of the Emperor, but as Herod Antipas had the ear of Tiberius, and willingly sided with the people, the procurator was defeated once more. The command of Tiberius was directly against him, and he was ordered to take away the shields, and hang them up in the temple of Augustus, at Cæsarea. The Jews consoled themselves that the Emperor was gravely offended at Pilate's folly. Henceforth, the clamour of the multitude nearly always succeeded.

Before long he found himself involved in another conflict with the people, in carrying out a work which was unquestionably of the highest value to Jerusalem, and for which he had already obtained the sanction of the Jewish authorities. The conduit which supplied the city and the Temple with water, had grown ruinous from age, and Pilate undertook to build a grand new aqueduct, twenty-five miles in length, which should bring a full and pure supply for the Temple and the citizens. As the Temple was to be benefited, he naturally thought that he might defray the expense from its treasury, forgetting that the money was Corban, or consecrated to God. Hardly had the news of his intention spread, than, at the next feast, a frantic cry rose that the Temple was to be plundered, and thousands streamed to the palace, to repeat the tactics of Cæsarea. But the procurator had this time prepared himself beforehand. He had scattered numbers of his soldiers, dressed as Jews, among the crowds, and no sooner had the tumultuous cries begun, than these assailed those round them with clubs, and speedily drove them off in wild terror, leaving many of their number, severely wounded, behind. Perhaps it was about this time, when the works had been pushed almost to the Pool of Siloam, that the tower, there, fell and killed eighteen men; a calamity attributed by the Rabbis to the wrath of God at the secularization of the Temple treasures. Pilate's aqueduct suffered no more hindrance in its completion.

CHAPTER XX.

HEROD ANTIPAS AND CHRIST'S OWN COUNTRY.

On the death of his father Herod, Galilee fell to the lot of Herod Antipas, who ruled over it during nearly all the lifetime of our Lord, and for six years after His death. His mother was the Samaritan, Malthace, so that he was a full brother of Archelaus, who was about a year older. He had been sent to Rome, for his education, with Archelaus and his half-brother Philip, when a boy of about thirteen, and the three had been entrusted there to the care of a private guardian. The evil genius of their house, their half-brother Antipater, who was much their senior, was already living in the imperial city. He had always hated Archelaus and Philip, as rivals in his hopes of the throne, and now took every opportunity to slander them to their father, so that, perhaps in consequence of this, they were recalled to Judea in the year B.C. 5. But this only made Antipater the more deadly in his hatred, and he succeeded in so poisoning their father's mind against them, that they almost dreaded sharing the fate of the two sons of Mariamne, who had fallen through the same fatal influence. Antipas, who had escaped Antipater's wiles, seemed likely to profit most by the misfortune, for, in his second will, made after the execution of Antipater, Herod, unable to clear his mind of the prejudice against them, had passed over both Archelaus and Philip, and named Antipas, the youngest, as his successor. Kindlier thoughts, however, returned before he actually died, and a third will was made, in which Archelaus was named king, and Antipas and Philip tetrarchs, their father's dominions being divided between them.

Antipas had received his name in honour of his paternal great-grandfather, as Antipater, his half-brother, had received that of his grandfather. In Rome, by a strange fortune, he had for a companion and fellow-scholar, one whose after-life was very different from his own—a lad named Menahem, who afterwards became a Christian teacher in Antioch. Antipas staid at school, in Rome, after Archelaus and Philip had been recalled to Judea, his quiet, peace-loving disposition having protected him, in some measure, from the slanders of Antipater, and from the distrust of his father. He was, however, by no means wanting in ability, else so shrewd a man as Herod would never have thought of making him his sole successor; nor could he, otherwise, have been supported, as he was, before Augustus, by Salome and the family, and by the leading men of Herod's government, in his suit for the crown, in preference to Archelaus. That prince, hated by nearly every one, found himself vigorously opposed by Antipas, and gained his cause only with mortifying abasements. Salome and Herod's counsellors may have put Antipas forward to

serve their own ends, but he had, himself, shown in the management of his claim, that, if quiet, he was none the less ambitious in a peaceful way.

When he entered on his government, in the year B.C. 4, he was about seventeen years old. His provinces were wide apart, for Galilee was in the north-west, and Perea in the south-east of the country, the territory of the free towns, known as Decapolis, separating them completely. They were both, however, so rich, especially Galilee, that they ranked as second in the paternal inheritance.

Under the wise guidance of his father's counsellors, Irenæus and Ptolemy, the care of Antipas was first turned to the repair of his kingdom, which had been sadly injured by the Romans and Arabs in the wars, and to the necessary security of his throne. In the south of Galilee he rebuilt and strongly fortified the town of Sepphoris,—which lay on an isolated hill, only two hours north of Nazareth,—and made it his capital, and at once the ornament of his kingdom, and its protection against Syro-Phenician, or even Roman attack. It had been taken and burned to the ground by the son of the proconsul Varus, who had marched against it from the neighbouring garrison town, Ptolemais, in the summer of the year B.C. 4, on occasion of the insurrection of Judas, the son of that Hezekiah whom Herod had put to death when he routed his band in the caverns of the 800 feet high cliffs of Arbela, on the Sea of Gennesareth. Varus had sold the inhabitants as slaves, but Antipas brought others and repeopled it. Jesus, in His early childhood, must have seen the town building, for it lay, full in view, at a short distance from the hill-top behind Nazareth, to which He often wandered.

Having thus secured his northern frontier, he turned to the opposite, outlying, extremity, where Perea bordered the Nabatean kingdom and was exposed to the Arabs, about half-way down the eastern edge of the Dead Sea. Among the precipitous volcanic cliffs and peaks of that region, he strengthened the fortress of Machaerus by high walls and towers, adding a residence for himself within its circuit. The defences, built at first by Alexander Jannæus, but destroyed by the Romans in the old Asmonean wars, were now made almost impregnable, and Antipas could boast of having secured his kingdom at another of its weakest points. He little thought that he himself was to earn his darkest stain by the execution of a lonely prisoner within its walls. But he did not trust to strong walls alone. He dreaded the neighbouring Arab prince Aretas as his most probable enemy, and allied himself with him by marrying his daughter. To flatter the empress-mother, Livia, whom Salome, at her death, A.D. about 10–13, had made her heir, and his neighbour, he built a town which he called Livias, on the site of the old Beth Haram, at the upper end of the Dead Sea. From Salome Livia had obtained, besides, the town of Jamnia and its district, in the Philistine plain, and Phasaelis and Archelaïs in the valley of the Jordan, close to his own borders, so

that he wished to be on good terms with her. Besides, Julia was at the time in favour with the Jews, for having given golden jars and dishes, and other costly offerings to the Temple.

In the first part of his reign, under Augustus, from the year A.D. 4 to 14, Antipas maintained a prudent restraint, for he had had no success in the single attempt he ventured towards a more intimate relation with the Emperor. On the banishment of Archelaus he had sought to become his heir, and to get his father's dominions as a whole, as had been intended in the second will, and seemingly had made himself chief accuser of his fallen brother, and of his government. But the answer of Augustus was the annexation of Judea to Syria, leaving Antipas, as his one consolation, the thought that as he was now the only Herod, he might assume the name, as he seems by his coins to have done, from this date.

His relations with Tiberius were more flattering. By countless proofs of dependence and obedient fidelity, shown, doubtless, in part, as later, in reports and espionage on the proconsuls, such as the suspicious and despotic emperor loved, he succeeded at last, after a probation of a good many years, in gaining great favour with him. To show his gratitude, Antipas, who had grown tired of Sepphoris for his capital, far off among the hills of Galilee, on the borders of his tetrarchy, and among a proud and independent people, determined to build a new one on the Sea of Gennesareth, near the hot springs of Emmaus. It was the finest part of his territory, alike for richness of soil, and beauty of landscape. The city was, of course, planned in the Roman style, and as, under the former emperor, every third town was called Cæsarea or Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augustus, the new metropolis was to be called Tiberias. The site chosen was one of the most beautiful on the lake, on a southerly bend of the shore, washed on its eastern side by the waves. Yet it was not, for the time, a fortunate one, for the reedy strand made it unhealthy, and, still worse, traces of an old burial-place were found as the streets were being laid out—a discovery which at once brought forward the Rabbis with entreaties that the spot might be abandoned, as thus at once unclean and unholy. But Herod paid no attention to the clamour, and, as soon as some streets were ready, filled the houses with whatever strangers were willing to take them. Erelong, however, he had to use force to get inhabitants, for no strict Jew would settle of his own accord in a place known to be polluted. He was even driven to give slaves and beggars building and garden ground, and to raise houses for them, and grant them special privileges, before he got his capital peopled. But a prejudice clung to it, which, even in after years, made all unclean for seven days after visiting it, and required rites of purification before the defilement could be removed. Tiberias is only once mentioned in the Gospels, and there is no trace of Jesus having ever entered it. But, in spite of all opposition, Herod transferred his residence to it from Sepphoris, and lavishly decorated his

palace, to the grief of the people, with heathen ornaments. The façade, which was adorned by sculptures of animals, was especially offensive to the Rabbis. The interior was furnished with almost imperial splendour, and it was long reported how the ceilings were gilded, and what wonderful candelabra and furniture of precious metal dazzled the eyes. When the palace and castle were stormed by the people, at the outbreak of the final war, lustres of Corinthian brass, splendid tables, and whole table-services of solid silver, were carried off as plunder. Close to this castle-palace, to the additional horror of the Jews, he built an amphitheatre, still to be traced, spacious enough for the greatest assemblies. The city was adorned, besides, with Grecian colonnades and marble statues, and, even at this day, ruins of fine buildings strew the beach—granite columns and blocks of costly marble, porphyry, and syenite, the wreck of the splendid villas of the great ones of Herod's day, when no heathen luxury had been wanting.

Still, with all this Roman magnificence, the Jews were not quite forgotten. A synagogue large enough for the greatest congregation, was built, apparently by Herod, in the spacious hall of which, two generations later, the wild revolutionary gatherings of the Galilæans were held during the great war with Rome. The archives of the province were transferred, with the seat of government, to Tiberias, and a castle in whose arsenals arms were stored for 70,000 men, was built for the garrison. For the next fifty years, Tiberias was the undisputed capital of Galilee, and, Cæsarea excepted, the finest city of Palestine. Its building was the great theme of local curiosity and interest in the north, for the five years after Jesus had reached His majority, for it was begun between A.D. 16 and 19, and was ready for inhabitants, at latest, by the year 22, and it lay only fifteen or eighteen miles from Nazareth. Sepphoris was henceforth, till Nero's days, only the second town of the province.

Galilee has a surpassing interest as the special scene of the ministry of Jesus, and the district in which He spent nearly all His life. It was through its cities and villages that He is recorded to have passed, once and again, teaching and preaching, and it was in Galilee that He had most popular support. To know something of a land whose air He thus breathed so long, amongst whose people He was wont to mingle, and by whose best characteristics He must have been affected, almost unconsciously, is essential to a vivid realization of His life.

The province lay wholly inland, with Phenicia as its western, and partly its northern neighbour, the small state of Ulatha reaching, from where Phenicia ended, to the Sea of Merom, on the north-eastern border. The Jordan marked its eastern limit, and Decapolis, with the territory of Samaria, defined its southern border. Its whole extent was inconsiderable, for it measured little more than seven-and-twenty miles from east to west, and five-and-twenty from north to south, its whole area being nearly the same as that of Bedford-

shire, one of the smallest of our English counties. Its boundaries varied, indeed, at different times, but, at the largest, it was rather like a moderate county than a province. The Talmud includes Cæsarea Philippi, twelve and a half miles north of the Sea of Merom, in it, which would bring it in a line with the precipitous mountain bed of the swift Leontes, where that river turns westward, at a right angle to its former course, and rushes straight to the ocean. In Christ's day, however, Cæsarea Philippi seems to have belonged to the dominions of Philip, rather than those of Antipas, and this was the case, also, with the neighbouring district of Ulatha, though both form the natural boundary of the Galilæan region.

Under these steep northern slopes extends a marshy plain, overgrown with tall reeds and swamp grass, and left uninhabited, from its pestilential air. South of this the waters gather to form Lake Merom, or el Huleh, overgrown with thick reeds, through which the Jordan slowly makes its way. The people of Galilee came to this district at all, only to hunt the wild boar and the buffalo, which roamed through the reed beds, in troops. It was shunned on account of the robbers and fugitives, who were wont to hide among its inaccessible morasses, and reed forests. Population recommences only when this region is passed, increasing as the point is reached where the caravan road between Damascus and Acre crosses the Jordan, near the spot now called Jacob's bridge, and stretches southward towards Tiberias.

The Sea of Tiberias, on which that city stood, was rightly called the Eye of Galilee. In the days of Christ, even more than now, all the splendour of nature in southern lands was poured on its shores. Culture, which left no spot unproductive, encircled the blue waters, even yet so enchanting a contrast to the yellow chalk hills that mostly fringe them. The western shore is still bright with many-coloured vegetation, while, on the east, the steep hills that sink to the water's edge are bare and gloomy volcanic rocks. The richest spot on the lake is the plain of Gennesareth, where, in our Lord's day, all the fruits of Palestine abounded. Even the hills were then covered with trees. Cypresses, oaks, almonds, firs, figs, cedars, citrons, olives, myrtles, palms, and balsams, are enumerated by a contemporary of Jesus as adorning the valleys or hills. The now bare landscape was then a splendid garden. Oleander bushes, with flowers of the loveliest colours, figs, vines, grain-fields, and soft meadows fringed the banks, and, while fruit-trees and olives covered the hills, the shores were dotted with waving palms.

The lake is shaped almost like a pear, the broad end towards the north. Its greatest width is six and three-quarter miles, and its extreme length twelve and a quarter. In Christ's day, the western shore was thickly dotted with towns and villages, which the Gospels will, hereafter, bring repeatedly before us. The eastern side has always been less populous, but even it had towns at every opening of the dark

basaltic hills, the outworks of the Gaulonitish range, which press close to the water's edge.

East of the Jordan, and half-way down the eastern side of the Lake, a strip of upland plateau, about four miles in width, and thirteen long, was included in Galilee, but it was of little value. South-west of the Lake, between the northern uplands and the range of Carmel, stretched out the plain of Esdraelon, the market of Galilee. Beyond other parts of the province, this great plain was crowded with life, and covered with fruitful fields, vineyards, and orchards, in the days of our Lord. Jewish writers are never tired of praising Galilee as a whole. Its climate, they said, was a well-nigh perpetual spring, its soil the most fertile in Palestine, its fruits renowned for their sweetness. For sixteen miles round Sepphoris, and, therefore, round Nazareth, its near neighbour, the land, it was boasted, flowed with milk and honey. The whole province, in fact, was, and is, even still, full of verdure, and rich in shade and pleasantness, the true country of the Song of Songs, and of the lays of the well-beloved. It was in a region where rich woods crowned the higher hills and mountains; where the uplands, gentle slopes, and broader valleys, were rich in pastures, cultivated fields, vineyards, olive groves, and orchards, and the palm groves of whose warmer parts were praised even by foreigners, that Jesus spent His life.

The main products of this delightful province, in the days of Christ, were the fish of Gennesareth, and the wheat, wine, and olive oil, which the whole land yielded so richly. Gischala, a town in northern Galilee, owed its name to the "fat soil" of its district, and the plain of Esdraelon, on part of which Nazareth looked down, was famous for its heavy crops of wheat. Jesus, indeed, lived in the centre of a part famous for its grain and oil. Farmers, and grape, and olive growers formed the richer classes around Him, and He was familiar with noisy market-days, when buyers came from all parts to the towns and villages, to trade for the teeming rural wealth. Magdala, on the Lake of Gennesareth, drove a flourishing trade in doves, for the sacrifices; no fewer than three hundred shops, it is said, being devoted to their sale. There were indigo planters also in its neighbourhood, then, as still. Woollen clothmaking and dyeing throve in it, for it had eighty clothmakers, and a part of the town was known as that of the dyers. Arbela, not far off, beside the hill caves, was no less noted for its clothmaking. Flax was grown widely, and woven by women into the finest kinds of linen. Kefr Hananiah—the village of Hananiah—in the centre of Galilee, was the pottery district of the province, and was famous for its earthenware, and especially for its jars for olive oil, which were necessarily in great demand in so rich an oil country.

Shut in from the sea-coast, as the Jewish territory had been in all ages, the Galilæan looked down from his hills, towards the sea, on the home of another and a very different race. The glittering white sand

on the shore, and the smoking chimneys of the glass manufactories rising from many points; the dingy buildings of Tyre, a contrast to the white walls of his own mountain home, and a sign of the busy industries, the weaving, dyeing, and much else which there flourished; the ceaseless traffic, both by sea and land, to and from this great centre of commerce, reminded him that the Hebrew world ended with his hills, and that on the sea-coast plain beneath them that of the Græco-Phœnician race began. Yet, there were many cities, and market towns, and villages, in his own hills and valleys—Gischala on the northern slopes of the 4,000 feet high Djebel Djermak, and Rama on the southern; Sepphoris crowning its hill of 900 feet; the strong hill fortress of Jotapata, overlooking the plain of Battauf on the north side of the Nazareth ridge; with Cana of Galilee on its northern edge, and Rimmon on its southern. All these, or the heights under which they nestled, were every-day sights of Jesus from the round summit behind His own highland Nazareth, and they were only a few that might be named. Looking south, over the plain of Esdraelon, on its further edge lay Legio, the old Megiddo, where the good king Josiah fell in battle, amidst such slaughter and lamentation, that Zechariah, more than a hundred years later, could find no better picture of "the land mourning, every family apart," than the "mourning in the valley of Megiddon," and that even the Apocalypse places the great final conflict, in Armageddon,—the Hill of Megiddo. The windings of the torrent Kishon carried with it the memories of another great historical battle, when the host of Sisera, thrown helpless by a sudden flood, perished before Barak and Deborah. In the east of the plain rose, on its slope, the pleasant Jezreel, once Ahab's capital, where Naboth had his vineyard, and the dogs licked the blood of the haughty Jezebel. Clustered round a spur of the hills of Gilboa, which rose 1,800 feet above the sea-level, half-way between Jezreel and Tabor, lay, on the different sides, the village of Sunem, where Elisha lived with the Shunammite widow, and the birthplace of Abishag, the fairest maiden in the kingdom of David—Nain, where the young man was one day to rise up again, alive, from his bier—and Endor—"the fountain of the people round"—where Saul saw the shade of Samuel. Close to the hill, on its southern side, bubbling up in a hollow of the rock, was the Spring of Trembling, where Gideon's test sent away all but the stout-hearted three hundred who won the great "day of Midian," the prophetic prototype of the triumph of the "Prince of Peace." On the south side of the ravine down which the spring flowed, rose the hills of Gilboa, where Saul and his three sons fell in battle. Where the rocky gorge, sinking steeply, opens a few miles beyond, to the east, into a pleasant mountain valley, watered by Harod, now swollen to a brook, lay the town of Bethshean or Scythopolis, to the walls of which the bodies of Saul and of his three sons, Jonathan among them, were hung up in triumph by the victorious Philistines.

The view from the Nazareth hills swept over all this landscape, but it embraced much more. Josephus says that there were two hundred and forty towns and villages in Galilee, and fifteen fortresses. Tabor, Sepphoris, and Jotapata, were among them, in Christ's own district, and Safed and Cæsarea Philippi within the sweep of His view. St. Mark speaks of towns, villages, and farmhouses on the Galilæan hill-sides Not a spot of ground was left idle, and the minute division of the soil, from the dense population, had caused the plough often to give way to the spade. Pasture land was turned into fields, as more profitable than cattle or even flocks, which were left to graze the mountains of Syria, and the barren hills of Judea. The rich dark soil of Esdraelon bore magnificent Indian corn and wheat, and the hill-slopes on its sides were noted for their wine, and the rich yield of their olive gardens and vineyards. The Rabbis, in their hyperbolical way, say that one waded in oil in Galilee. "It never suffers from want of people," says Josephus, "for its soil is rich, with trees of all kinds on it, and its surpassing fertility yields a splendid return to the farmer. The ground is worked with the greatest skill, and not a spot left idle. The ease with which life is supported in it, moreover, has overspread it with towns and well-peopled villages, many of them strongly fortified. The smallest has over fifteen thousand inhabitants. The ease with which Josephus levied 100,000 Galilæan troops seems to indicate a population of, perhaps, two millions, and the general prosperity is shown in the readiness with which Herod raised a Roman contribution of 100 talents in Galilee, as compared with Judea.

The pictures in the Gospels support this description. Everywhere the scene is full of life. Busy labour enlivens the vineyard, or ploughs the field, or digs the garden. In the towns, building is going on vigorously: the extra millstone lies ready beside the mill: the barns are filled and new ones about to be built: vineyards stretch along the terraced hill-sides, and outside the town are seen the white-washed stones of the cemeteries. On the roads, and beside the hedges, the blind and cripple await the gifts of passers-by: labourers are being hired in the market-places, and the farm servant wends homewards in the evening with his plough: the songs and dance of light-hearted youth on the village green, are heard from a distance: the children play and strive in open places of the towns: visitors knock at closed doors even late in the night: and the drunken upper servant storms at and maltreats the maids. From morning to night the hum of many-coloured lusty life everywhere rises: the busy crowds have no time to think about higher things. One has bought a field and must go to see it, another has to prove a new yoke of oxen, and a third has some other business—a feast, a marriage, or a funeral. To use our Lord's words, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, they married wives and were given in marriage, as full of the world in its ambitions, cares, labours and pleasures, as if the little moment of their lives were to last for ever.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GALILÆANS AND THE BORDER LANDS.

GALILEE got its name as the circle or region of the heathen nations, and hence, to the southern Jews of Isaiah's days, it was "the heathen country." It included the districts assigned to Asher, Naphtali, Zebulon, and Issachar. But these tribes never obtained entire possession of their territories, and contented themselves with settling among the Canaanite population, whom they, in some cases, made tributary,—the Jewish colonies remaining centres of Judaism in places which retained their old heathen names. Kedesh in Naphtali, near Lake Merom, the birthplace of Barak, with twenty small cities lying round it, was, originally, "the land of Galilee" in Joshua's time, and in the days of the kings, from the population mainly belonging to the neighbouring Phenicia, but the mixed character of the people, which was a necessary consequence of Galilee being a border-land, extended the name, in the end, to the whole of the Province. Even in Solomon's time the population was mixed. The hilly district, called Cabul—"dry, sandy, unfruitful"—which he gave to Hiram, king of Tyre, as a niggardly return for service rendered in the building of the Temple, contained twenty towns, inhabited chiefly by Phenicians, but was so worthless that Hiram, in contemptuous ridicule, playing on the name of the district, called it, in Phenician, Chabalon—"good for nothing." The separation from the House of David, and from Jerusalem, under the king of Israel, and the Assyrian captivity at a later date, further affected the northern population. To the prophet Isaiah they were the people "that walked in darkness and dwelt in the land of the shadow of death," alike from their separation from Jerusalem, their living among the heathen, and their national calamities, though he anticipates a bright future for them in the light of the Messiah. After the exile two great changes took place. Jewish colonists gradually spread over the land once more, and the name Galilee was extended to the whole north on this side of the Jordan, so that the territory of the tribe of Issachar, with the plain of Esdraelon; Zebulon, with the southern part of the Sea of Gennesareth; and Naphtali, and Asher, were included in it. The new Jewish settlers had no longer any political jealousy of Jerusalem, and once more frequented the Temple, while the fact that they were surrounded by heathen races made them, perhaps, more loyal to Judaism than they otherwise would have been; just as the Protestants of Ireland are more intensely Protestant because surrounded by Romanism. Still, though faithful, their land was "defiled" by heathen citizens and neighbours, and the narrow bigotry of Judea looked askance at it from this cause. Besides Jews, it had not a few Phenicians, Syrians,

Arabs, and Greeks settled over it. Carmel had become almost a Syrian colony, and Kedesh retained the mixed population it had had for ages, while the eastern end of the Esdraelon valley was barred to the Jew by the heathen town of Scythopolis,—the ancient Bethshean. Moreover, the great caravan road, from Damascus to Ptolemais, which ran over the hills from Capernaum, through the heart of Galilee, brought many heathen into the country. The great transport of goods employed such numbers of heathen, as camel drivers, hostlers, labourers, conductors, and the like, that the towns facing the sea were little different from those of Phenicia. Thus Zebulon is described as "a town with many very fine houses, as good as those of Tyre, or Sidon, or Berytus." The places created or beautified by the Herods, in Roman style, could hardly have been so if the population had been strict Jews. The attempt to build heathen cities like Tiberias, or the restored Sepphoris, would have excited an insurrection in Judea, but the less narrow people of Galilee let Antipas please his fancy; nor was there ever, apparently, such a state of feeling caused by all his Roman innovations as was roused by the amphitheatre at Jerusalem alone. Separated by Samaria from the desolate hills of Judea, the home of the priests and Rabbis, the Galilæans were less soured by the sectarian spirit paramount there, and less hardened in Jewish orthodoxy, while, in many respects, they had caught the outside influences round them at home. Hence their Judaism was less exclusive and narrow than that of, perhaps, any other section of the Jewish world.

But though less bigoted than their southern brethren, the Galilæan Jews were none the less faithful to the Law. They frequented the feasts at Jerusalem in great numbers, and were true to their synagogues, and to the hopes of Israel. Pharisees, and "doctors of the Law" were settled in every town, and their presence implies an equally wide existence of synagogues. In the south, tradition was held in supreme honour, but in Galilee the people kept by the law. In Jerusalem the Rabbis introduced refinements and changes, but the Galilæans would not tolerate novelties. Our Lord's wide knowledge of Scripture, His reverence for the law, and His scorn of tradition, were traits of His countrymen as a race.

Nor did their forbearance, in the presence of heathen fashions and ways of thought, affect their morals for evil, any more than their religion. In many respects these were stricter than those of Judea: much, for example, was forbidden in Galilee, in the intercourse of the sexes, which was allowed at Jerusalem. Their religion was freer, but it was also deeper; they had less of the form, but more of the life.

"Cowardice," says Josephus, "was never the fault of the Galilæans. They are inured to war from their infancy, nor has the country ever been wanting in great numbers of brave men." The mountain air they breathed made them patriots, but their patriotism was guided by zeal

for their faith. While warmly loyal to Herod, in gratitude for his subduing the lawless bands who had wasted their country, after the civil wars,—and quiet and well-disposed to Antipas, during the forty-three years of his reign, they were none the less fixed in their abhorrence of Rome, the heathen tyrant of their race. In revolt after revolt they were the first to breast the Roman armies, and they were the last to defend the ruins of Jerusalem, stone by stone, like worthy sons of those ancestors who "jeopardised their lives unto the death in the high places of the field." There were families like that of the Zealot, Hezekiah, and Judas, the Galilæan, in whom the hatred of Rome was handed down from generation to generation, and which, in each generation, furnished martyrs to the national cause. A hundred and fifty thousand of the youth of Galilee fell in the last struggle with Rome, and few narratives are more stirring than the defence of the Galilæan fortresses, one after another, in the face of all odds. Even Titus appealed to the magnificent heroism of these defenders of their freedom and their country, to rouse the ardour of his own army. Nor was their devotion to their leaders less admirable. Josephus boasts of the heartiness and trust the Galilæans reposed in him. Though their towns were destroyed in the war, and their wives and children carried off, they were more concerned for the safety of their general than for their own troubles.

The Jew of the south, wrapped in self-importance, as living in or near the holy city, amidst the schools of the Rabbis, and under the shadow of the Temple, and full of religious pride in his assumed superior knowledge of the Law, and greater purity as a member of a community nearly wholly Jewish, looked down on his Galilæan brethren. The very ground he trod was more holy than the soil of Galilee, and the repugnance of the North to adopt the prescriptions of the Rabbis was, itself, a ground of estrangement and self-exaltation. He could not believe that the Messiah could come from a part so inferior, for "the Law was to go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Jesus found willing hearers and many disciples in the cities and towns of Galilee, but He made little impression on Judea.

Yet, Galilee, from the earliest times, had vindicated its claims to honour for the intellectual vigour of its people. Not only physically and morally, but even in mental freshness and force, it was before the narrow and morbid south, which had given itself up to the childish trifling of Rabbinism. The earliest poetry of Israel rose among the Galilæan hills, when Barak of Naphtali had triumphed over the Canaanites. The Song of Songs was composed in Galilee by a poet of nature, whose heart and eyes drank in the inspiration of the bright sky and the opening flowers, and who could tell how the fig-tree put forth its leaves, and the vine sprouted, and the pomegranate opened its blossoms. Hosea, the prophet, belonged to Issachar; Jonah to Zebulon, Nahum came from Elkosh in Galilee, and in the Gospels a noble band of Galilæans group themselves round the central

figure, Peter, the brave and tender-hearted—James and John—Andrew and Philip—and Nathanael, of Cana, not to speak of others, or of the women of Galilee, who honoured themselves by ministering to Christ of their substance. It was from Galilee, moreover, that the family of the great Apostle of the heathen emigrated to Tarsus, in Cilicia, for they belonged to Gischala, a Galilæan town, though their stock originally was of the tribe of Benjamin.

The Talmud sketches, in a few words, the contrast between the two provinces—"The Galilæan loves honour, and the Jew money." The Rabbis admit that the Galilæans, in their comparative poverty, were temperate, pure, and religious. Their fidelity to their faith was shown by their fond and constant visits to the Temple, in spite of the hostile Samaritan territory between, and it was through their zeal that the Passover was celebrated for eight days instead of seven. When Christ appeared, they threw the same ardour and fidelity into His service. In their midst the Saviour, persecuted elsewhere, took constant refuge. They threw open their land to Him, as a safe shelter from the rage of the Jews, almost to the last. He went forth from among them, and gathered the first-fruits of His kingdom from them, and it was to a band of Galilæans that He delivered the commission to spread the Gospel, after His death, through the world.

The district of Perea, on the east of the Jordan, was included, with Galilee, in the section ruled over by Herod Antipas, and was the scene, in part, of the ministry, first of John the Baptist, and then of Jesus. It was larger than Galilee, extending, north and south, from the city of Pella, to the fortress of Machærus—that is, from opposite Scythopolis, half-way down the Dead Sea, and, east and west, from the Jordan to Philadelphia, the ancient Rabbath Ammon. It was, thus, about seventy-five miles in length, by, perhaps, thirty in breadth, though the boundaries seem to have varied at different times. It was much less fruitful than Galilee. "The greater part of it," says Josephus, "is a desert, rough, and much less suitable for the finer kinds of fruits than Galilee. In other parts, however, it has a moist soil, and produces all kinds of fruits, and its plains are planted with trees of all sorts, though the olive, the vine, and the palm-tree are cultivated most. It is well watered in these parts with torrents, which flow from the mountains, and are never dry, even in summer." Towards the deserts, which hemmed it in along its eastern edge, lay the hill fortress and town Gerasa, 1,800 feet above the sea-level. It was on the caravan road through the mountains, from Bozra, a place of considerable trade; while its magnificent ruins still show that, in Christ's day, it was the finest city of the Decapolis. Two hundred and thirty pillars, still standing, and the wreck of its public buildings, —baths, theatres, temples, circus, and forum, and of a triumphal arch, make it easy to recall its former splendour. The line of the outer walls can be easily traced. From the triumphal arch, outside the city, a long street passes through the city gate to the forum, still

skirted by fifty-seven Ionic columns. Colonnades adorned mile after mile of the streets, which crossed, at right angles, like those of an American town.

It must have been a gay, as well as a busy and splendid, scene, when Jesus passed through the country on His Perean journeys.

But the tide of civilized life has ebbed, and left Gerasa without an inhabitant for many centuries.

About twenty-five miles south of Gerasa, and, like it, between twenty and thirty miles east of the Jordan, lay Philadelphia. It was the old capital of Ammon, and in Christ's day, the southern frontier post against the Arabs. Though two thousand five hundred feet above the sea, it sheltered itself in two narrow valleys, each brightened by flowing streams; the upland "city of the waters," with hills rising on all sides round it. The main stream, faced with a long stone quay; terraces rising above it, lined with rows of pillars; the citadel, seen far and near, on a height between the two valleys, give us a glimpse of it. The old city which Joab besieged, and where Uriah fell, had given place to a Roman one. Fine temples, theatres, and public and private buildings, long ruined, were then alive with motley throngs, but the whole scene has been utterly deserted, now, for ages, and rank vegetation rises in its long silent streets, and in the courts of its temples and mansions.

Hesbon, about fifteen miles nearly south of Ammon, on the Roman road which ran from Damascus, through Bozra and Ammon,—branching from Hesbon, west, to Jericho, and south, to Edom, was the third and last frontier town of Perea. It lay among the Pisgah mountains, three thousand feet above the level of the sea, amidst brown hills, fretted with bright green lines along the course of numerous streamlets, oozing from the limestone rocks. Its ruins lie in great confusion, and serve only to tell of wealth and prosperity long since passed away. In the valley below, a great volume of water gushing from the rock, once filled the famous pools of Hesbon, —to the writer of the Song of Songs, like the laughing eyes of his beloved. From Hesbon, the eye ranges over a wide table-land of undulating downs, bright with flowers, or rough with prickly shrubs, seamed with gorges sinking abruptly towards the Jordan, and noisy with foaming streams which leap from ledge to ledge in their swift descent, between banks hidden by rank vegetation.

These three towns lie on the outer edge of the lofty plateau, east of the Jordan, where the long wall of the limestone hills of Gilead and Ammon begins to sink towards the desert. On the western edge of the plateau itself, nearer the Jordan, and at the north of the district, lay Pella, on a low flat hill, only 250 feet above the sea-level, rich in living waters, and embosomed in other higher hills. Built as a military post, by veterans of Alexander's army, it bore the name of their own Macedonian capital. It was afterwards famous as the retreat of the Christians before the fall of Jerusalem; among others, of the

relations of Christ, the last of whom died as fifteenth bishop of the local church. The storm of the great war, which wasted Perea on every side, passed harmlessly by Pella, leaving it and the infant Church untouched. With what fond regards must Jesus have often looked from across the Jordan, on the spot which one day was to shelter His servants.

North of Pella, twelve hundred feet above the sea-level, on the edge of the deep cleft through which the Hieromax flows to the Sea of Tiberias, stood Gadara, a place famous in Christ's day for its hot sulphurous baths. It had been rebuilt by Pompey, after having lain for a time in ruins, and gloried in its streets paved with basalt, its colonnades of Corinthian pillars, and its massive buildings in Roman style, amidst which Jesus may have walked,—for it was in the neighbourhood of this town that He cured the two men possessed with devils. Numerous tombs hewn in the hills around, still illustrate a striking feature of the Gospel narratives.

Gadara and Pella are both on the western side of the long range of the mountains of Gilead—the old territory of Reuben and Gad—which stretch along the eastern side of the Jordan valley, till they merge in the Pisgah range at the north of the Dead Sea. Rocky glens and valleys, whose lower slopes are often terraced for vines; rolling highlands, for the most part clothed with forests of ilex, oak, and terebinth; open plains and meadows; rushing streams, fringed with rich vegetation; still justify the choice of the two tribes. The limestone hills are identical with those of western Palestine, but the abundance of water makes the whole region much richer. Jesus must often have wandered amidst its wheat fields, olive grounds, vineyards, and fig and pomegranate orchards, and under its leafy forests,—for He once and again visited these districts. The road stretches north from the ford of the Jordan, near Jericho, up the green Wady Scha'ib to Ramoth Gilead, 2,700 feet above the sea, past Djebel Oscha, the hill of the prophet Hosea, 800 feet higher, to Wady Zerka, the ancient river Jabbok—thence to the heights of Kala'at er Robad, where Saladin in after days built a castle. Resting here, Christ's eye would range over Palestine far and near, from the north end of the Dead Sea, along the whole Jordan valley, the river gleaming occasionally in its windings. Part of the Sea of Galilee would be before Him to the north, and, to the west, Ebal and Gerizim, with Mount Tabor, and the ridge of Carmel stretching into the far distance, and the wide plain of Esdraelon. Farther north, He would see the hills of Safed, beyond the Sea of Galilee, and far away, in the blue haze, the snow-sprinkled peaks of Hermon. From this point His road would lie through Pella, across the Jordan, on the farther side of which the steep gorge of the Wady Farrah led up to the plain of Esdraelon and His own district.

With the mountains of Pisgah, on the east of the Dead Sea, a wild inaccessible region begins, counting among its peaks Beth Peor, from

which Balaam once blessed Israel, as it lay encamped below in the open meadows opposite Jericho, where Antipas, in Christ's day, built the town of Livias, in honour of the Empress-mother. Mount Nebo, where Moses was buried in an unknown grave, and the summit from which he surveyed the land he was not to enter, are in this range, and it was in a cave in their secluded valleys that Jewish tradition believed Jeremiah to have hidden the ark, and the sacred vessels of the Temple, till the coming of the Messiah, in a secrecy known only to God and the angels.

The Jewish population in Perea was only small, the heathen element greatly prevailing. In the northern parts, the Syrian races were in the majority; in the southern, the people were largely Arab.

The cities were in most cases independent, with a district belonging to each of them, and thus, though in the territories of Antipas, were not part of his dominions. Under the name of the Decapolis,—"the ten cities,"—Philadelphia, Gadara, Hippos, Damascus, Raphana, Dio, Pella, Gerasa, and Kanatha, were confederated, under direct Roman government, with Scythopolis, on the west side of the Jordan, in a league of peace and war against native robber bands and the Bedouin hordes; and this made them virtually a distinct state. Antipas, apparently, had only so much of the district as did not belong to these cities.

Above Perea, in Christ's day, the Tetrarchy of Philip reached to the slopes of Hermon on the north, and away to the desert on the east. It included the provinces of Gaulonitis, Iturea, Trachonitis, Auranitis, and Batanea.

Gaulonitis—still known as Golân, reached from Cæsarea Philippi, or Panias, on the slopes of Mount Hermon, to the Hieromax, at the south of the Sea of Galilee, stretching back twenty to thirty miles in barren uplands of volcanic origin, to the green pastures of Batanea or Bashan, the oasis of the region, with the district of Iturea on its north—the lava plateau of Trachonitis on its east, and the equally waste tract of Auranitis, or the Hauran, on the south. Gaulonitis, which we know Jesus to have visited, looked over towards Galilee from a range of hills running parallel with the Jordan, north and south; a second and third ridge rising behind, in their highest peaks, to the height of 4,000 feet. Besides Cæsarea Philippi, at its extreme north, the province boasted the town of Bethsaida, rebuilt by Philip, and called Livias, after the daughter of Augustus. It lay in a green opening at the upper end of the Lake of Galilee. On the hills overlooking the lake, towards its southern end, lay the town of Gamala, and in the valley at the south extremity was Hippos, one of the cities of the Decapolis.

Iturea—north of Gaulonitis, on the lower slopes of Hermon—was a region of inaccessible mountain fastnesses, and intricate defiles, which favoured and helped to perpetuate the lawlessness which the first settlers may have derived from their Arab ancestor. In the south it has a rich soil, watered by numerous streams from Hermon, but the

north is a wild region of jagged rocks, heaped up in uttermost confusion, or yawning in rents and chasms. The Iturcans, fonder of plunder than industry, had, till Herod tamed them, an evil name, as mere robbers, issuing from their savage retreats to prey upon the caravans passing from Damascus to the Sea. "The hills," says Strabo, "are inhabited by Itureans and Arabs, who are mere hordes of robbers; the plains by a farming population, who are constantly plundered by the hill people, and thus always need help from outside. Gathering in the recesses of Lebanon and Hermon, the mountain banditti organized raids as far as Sidon and Berytus on the coast, and to the gates of Damascus on the east. Famous as archers and bold riders, they were largely enrolled in the Roman army, in which their skill became proverbial; but the legions, nevertheless, looked askance at them as the worst set in the service. Their boundaries varied, like their fortune in war, and hence are seldom described alike.

Trachonitis was the name given to the district east and south of Iturea, though the two seem, at times, to be interchangeable names for nearly the same region. Iturea often embraces the tract usually known as Trachonitis, the "Argob," or "Stony," of the Bible, Trachonitis being apparently a mere translation of this older name. It was part of the kingdom of Og, conquered by the Israelites before they entered Canaan, and was assigned to the half-tribe of Manasseh. It is about twenty-two miles from north to south, and fourteen from east to west, and marks the focus of ancient volcanic energy in the district. It is a vast ocean of basalt, cracked and rent into innumerable fissures in cooling, and offering in its countless chasms an almost impenetrable shelter to whole armies. "In its rough, and almost inaccessible rocks," says Strabo, "are hidden spaces from which a thousand men could assemble for a foray against the merchants of Damascus. The chief town, Kanatha, on the caravan route, belonged to the Decapolis, and was protected from the robber population around by strong Roman fortifications. As a whole, it was a terribly wild region. "The inhabitants of the country," says Josephus, "live in a mad way, and pillage the district of the Damascenes, their rulers at times sharing the plunder. It is hard to restrain them, for robbery has long been their profession, and they have no other way of living, for they have neither any city of their own, nor any lands, but only some holes or dens of the earth, where they and their cattle live together. They contrive, however, to secure water, and store corn in granaries, and are able to make a great resistance by sudden sallies, for the entrances of their caves are so narrow, that only one person can enter at a time, though they are incredibly large within. The ground over their habitations is not very high, but rather a plain, while the rocks are very difficult of entrance without a guide." Herod did his utmost against them, but his success was only passing, till at last he settled several military colonies in the district, and by their incessant patrols managed to keep the robbers in check.

South of this fierce and lawless region lay Auranitis, now known as the Hauran, a high plateau of treeless downs, of the richest soil, stretching from Gilead to the Desert, and from the Ledja to the uplands of Moab on the south. Not a stone is to be seen, and the great caravans of well-fed camels, laden with corn and barley, constantly met with on the way to Damascus, show what it must have been in the days of Christ. Even yet, however, no one can travel through it safely, unarmed, and the fellahin, except close to towns, have to plough and sow with a musket slung at their back. It is the granary of Damascus, and the ruins of numerous towns, all of basalt, even to the doors of the houses, show that the population must have been great.

Batanea, the ancient Bashan, was a mountainous district of the richest type, abounding in forests of evergreen oaks, and extremely rich in its soil. The hills, which, in some cases, reach a height of 6,000 feet, and the cattle which fed in the rich meadows, are often alluded to in the Old Testament. Desolate now, it was densely peopled eighteen hundred years ago, as the ruins of towns and cities of basalt, thickly strewn over its surface, and still almost as perfect as when they were built, strikingly prove.

In the lifetime of Christ, a large Jewish population lived in all these districts, in the midst of much larger numbers of Syrians, Arabs, Greeks, and Phenicians, under the rule of Philip, the son of Herod and of Cleopatra of Jerusalem. He was between Archelaus and Antipas in age, and had been educated with them in Rome, but kept entirely aloof from family intrigues, and was true-hearted enough to plead the cause of Archelaus before Augustus. The best of Herod's sons, he retained not only the good-will of his family, but was held in high esteem by the Romans, and the Jews especially honoured him as no son of a Samaritan, but sprung from a daughter of Zion. During a reign of thirty-seven years, he was no less gentle to his subjects than peaceful towards his neighbours. "He showed himself," says Josephus, "moderate and quiet in his life and government. He constantly lived in the country subject to him, and used to travel through it, continually, to administer justice; his official seat—the sella curulis—accompanying him everywhere; always ready to be set down in the market place, or the road, to hear complaints, without any one suffering from delay." His court was formed by only a few friends, whom he seldom changed, and it is recorded of him that in his care for his people he levied almost fewer taxes than he needed. Modest in his ambitions, he cared more for the peaceful triumph of discovering the sources of the Jordan than for noisy fame. The neighbourhood of the romantic city he built on the edge of Hermon was the scene of the Transfiguration; but he is not mentioned in the Gospels, though it is a noble tribute to him that Jesus once and again took refuge in his territories, from the craft of His own ruler, Antipas, and the hate of the Galilæan Pharisees. He married his niece Salome,

daughter of Herod-Philip, his uncrowned brother, and of the too well-known Herodias. His reign continued through the whole life of our Lord, and he died childless, at last, a year or so after the Crucifixion, in Bethsaida, or Livias, on the Lake of Galilee, and was laid in a tomb which he himself had built as his final resting-place.

On the southern side of the Plain of Esdraelon, the country rises again into rounded hills, which extend from the great coast plain, across the deep chasm of the Jordan, till they sink away in the east, while towards the south they end only in the wilderness of el Tih, or the Wanderings. The northern part of these hills, on the west of the Jordan, was the land of the Samaritans. Their country began at En Gannim—the fountain of gardens—at the south end of Esdraelon, and ended, in the south, at the mountain pass of Akrabbi—or, the "Scorpions," north of Shiloh. The whole region is a network of countless valleys running in every direction, but mainly east and west.

In these valleys lived the descendants of the Assyrian tribes, whom Esarhaddon had sent to fill the room left by the ten tribes whom he had carried away, and the children of such of the ten tribes themselves as escaped deportation, or had found their way back, and of Jews who had fled thither from time to time, from any cause, from Judea. The growth of the new Jewish kingdom on the south had encroached greatly on the Samaritan tesritory, but it was still a desirable land, and far more fruitful than Judea itself.

The soft limestone or chalky hills of Samaria, unlike those farther south, are not without many springs. Fertile bottoms of black earth are not infrequent, and rich fields, gardens, and orchards, alternate in the valleys, while vineyards and trees of different kinds spread up the slopes, and woods of olives and walnuts crown the soft outline of many of the hills. The meadows and pasture land of Samaria were famous in Israel.

Such was the territory which lay between Christ, in Galilee, and the hills of Judea. Of the people, I shall have occasion to speak at a future time.

CHAPTER XXII.

BEFORE THE DAWN.

No power ever showed so great a genius for assimilating conquered nations to itself as Rome. Its tributary provinces habitually merged their national life, erelong, in that of their conqueror. Her laws, language, and religion, more or less completely took root wherever her eagles were permanently planted, and have left the records of their triumphs in the wide extent of the so-called Latin race, even at this day. But it was very different in Palestine. There, Rome met a state of things unknown elsewhere; which she neither cared, nor was able to comprehend. The Spaniard or Gaul had given no trouble after he was once subdued, but readily accepted her arts, civilization, and laws. It was reserved for the mountaineers of Judea to refuse any peaceable relations to the mistress of the world; to treat her proudest sons with haughty contempt, and to regard their very presence in the country as a defilement.

The discipline of the centuries before the Roman conquest of Palestine by Pompey, had formed a nation every way unique. The religious institutions of its ancestors had become the object of a passionate idolatry, which claimed, and willingly received, the whole of life for its service. The tragedy of the Exile, the teaching of the leaders of the Return, and of their successors, and the fierce puritanism kindled by the Syrian persecutions, and deepened by the Maccabæan struggle, had formed a people whose existence was woven into one with their law; who would endure any torture, or let themselves be thrown to beasts in the circus, rather than alter a word which their law forbade—whose women would bear the agonies of martyrdom rather than eat unclean food, and whose men would let themselves be cut down, without an attempt at resistance, rather than touch the sword on a Sabbath. Their whole life was a succession of rites and observances, as sacred in their eyes as the details of his caste to a Brahmin. Intercourse with other nations was possible only to the most limited extent. They shrank from all other races as from foulness or leprosy. The common Jew shunned a heathen or Samaritan; the Pharisee shrank from the common Jew; the Essene ascetic withdrew from mankind, into the desert. The dread of ceremonial defilement made solitude the only security, till the desire for it became morbid, like that of the Samaritan settlers of the islands of the Red Sea, who implored any stranger to keep at a distance. The very country consecrated by so many purifications was sacred, and hence there could be no greater shock to the feelings of the nation, than that any who were ceremonially unclean should pollute it by their presence. Even among themselves constant care was required to maintain

or restore their purity, but the presence of heathen among them, made daily defilement almost inevitable. What, then, must have been the horror of the nation, when even the Holy of Holies, which the High Priest alone could enter, and that only once a year, after endless purifications, was polluted by Pompey, and when, as in the days of the Prophet, that Name which a Jew dared not even utter, was blasphemed every day by the heathen soldiery? The cry of the Psalmist, in times long past, was once more that of every Jew, "O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance: Thy Holy Temple have they defiled."

Such a calamity could be regarded only as a judgment from Jehovah on the nation. In words which were constantly read in the synagogues, they sighed to hear that "The wrath of Jehovah was so kindled against His people, because they were defiled with their own works, that He abhorred His inheritance, and had given it into the hand of the heathen, and let them that hated them rule over Israel." The very land seemed under a curse. It appeared as if the dew of blessing no longer fell; as if the fruits had lost their fragrance and taste, and the fields refused their harvests. The practical Roman could not understand such an idealistic race; with him law was no less supreme than it was with the Jew, but his law was that of the Empire, the Jew's the law of an unseen God; his had for its aim external order, and material civilization, the Jew's ignored material progress, and was at war with the first conditions of political submission. Like the Jew, the Roman started from the idea of duty, but it was the duty owed to the State: the Jew repudiated any earthly authority, and owned allegiance only to a theocracy. The Roman cared only for the present life; to the Jew the present was indifferent. The one worshipped the Visible; the other the Unseen. To the Jew, the Roman was unclean and accursed; to the Romans, the Jews were ridiculous for their religion, and hateful for their pride. Each despised the other. Pompey had begun by treating their most sacred prejudices with contempt, and his successors followed in his steps. The murderer of their royal house, and the friend of the hated Samaritans, was made King in Jerusalem, and at a later day, Roman Procurators sucked the very marrow from the land, oppressed the people to the uttermost, and paid no regard to their tenderest sensibilities. The government was as ruthless as that of England in India would be if it trampled under foot, in the pride of strength, every Hindoo prejudice it found in its way. Roman religion was faith in the magic of the Roman name, and the irresistibleness of the Roman arms; a worship only of brute force, hard, unfeeling, coarse; which could not understand anything transcendental like the creed of the Jew, or the possibility of men caring for an idea, far less of their dying for it.

It was no wonder that the Rabbis saw, in such a power, the fourth beast of the Book of Daniel—"a beast diverse from all the others,

exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass, which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the remnant of God's people with its feet." "Thou madest the world for our sakes," says one of the latest Jewish seers, who himself had seen the miseries of these times; "As for the other people"—the Romans and all mankind besides—"who also come from Adam, Thou hast said they are nothing, but are like spittle, or the droppings from a cask. And now, O Lord, behold these heathen, who have ever been counted as nothing, have begun to be lords over us, and to devour us. But we, Thy people, whom Thou hast called Thy first-born, Thy only begotten, and the object of Thy fervent love, are given into their hands. If the world now be made for our sakes, why do we not possess our inheritance over the world? How long shall this endure?" "Hear, thou, I will talk with thee," He makes the Messiah say to the Roman Eagle, "Art thou not the last of the four beasts which I made to reign in my world, who hast overcome all the beasts that were past, and hast power over the world with great fearfulness, and much wicked oppression? For thou hast afflicted the meek, thou hast hurt the peaceable, thou hast loved the Faithless, and hated the Faithful, and destroyed the towns of those who brought forth fruit, and the walls of those who did thee no harm. Thy wrongful dealings have gone up to the Highest, and thy pride to the Mighty One. Therefore, O eagle, thou shalt perish, with thy fearful wings, thy baleful winglets, thy ferocious heads, thy tearing claws, and all thy foul body; that the earth may be refreshed, and be delivered from thy violence, and that she may hope in the justice and mercy of Him that made her."

Such concentrated hatred and bitter contemptuous scorn from a people so feeble and, in many ways, to a Roman, so ridiculous, was naturally met by equal dislike, and, if possible, greater contempt. The Jews of Rome had been originally, for the most part, slaves, and their numbers were increased yearly by the sales of the slave market. But buyers had found that Jew slaves were more trouble in a household, about their law, than they were worth, and hence they were allowed to buy their own freedom at a very low price. A vast number of Jewish freedmen had thus gradually accumulated in Rome, to the horror of the Romans at large, by whom they were reckoned one of the greatest plagues of the city. The Acts of the Apostles show how frequent must have been the tumults they caused. Squalid, dirty, troublesome, repulsive, yet sneering at the gods and temples of their masters, and constantly aggressive in the hope of making proselytes, they were the special objects, by turns, of the ridicule, loathing, and hatred of the haughty Romans, and this hatred was intensified by the favour their religion had found with some of their own wives and daughters. The officials who went from Rome to Judea to rule the nation, carried with them, already, a scorn and abhorrence for the nation, which found its expression in a ready belief of reports so revolting and incredible as that they worshipped the head of an ass,

as God, in their Temple. What treatment they might expect from Roman governors is shadowed in many utterances of different classes. Speaking of the Jews sent to the pestilent climate of Sardinia, to put down the robbers there, Tacitus adds, "If they perished by the climate it was no loss." Apollonius, of Tyana, is made to say to Vespasian, in Alexandria—"When one came from the scene of war and told of 30,000 Jews whom you had killed in one battle, and of 50,000 in another, I took the speaker aside, and asked him, 'What are you talking about; have you nothing more worth telling than that?'" Even the calm and lofty Marcus Aurelius, at a later day, is credited with an expression of the common hatred of the Jews, which, in its biting contempt, surpasses all others. "O Marcomanni! O Quadi. O Sarmatians!" cried the Emperor, when he passed from Egypt into Palestine, and found himself among the Jews, "I have found a people, at last, who are lower than you!"

The feelings of the Jews towards the Romans had originally been those of admiration and respect, for their bravery and great deeds. Judas Maccabæus had sought their alliance, and, even so late as the reign of Johannes Hyrcanus, the nation retained kindly feelings towards them. It was the fault of Pompey that so great and sudden a revulsion took place. The treachery by which he got possession of the country and the capital; the insolent contempt with which he defiled the Holy of Holies, and the vanity which led him to carry off the royal family, who had put themselves confidingly under his protection to grace his triumph, filled the race with an abiding hatred of the very name of Rome. A writer of the times has left us the impressions made by such acts:—"My ear heard the sound of war, the clang of the trumpet which called to murder and ruin! The noise of a great army, as of a mighty rushing wind, like a great pillar of fire, rolling hitherward over the plains! Jehovah brings up hither a mighty warrior from the ends of the earth. He has determined war against Jerusalem and against His land! The princes of the land went out to him with joy, and said, 'Thou art welcome, come in peace.' They have made smooth the rough ways before the march of the stranger; they opened the gates of Jerusalem. They crowned the walls with garlands. He entered, as a father enters the house of his sons, in peace. He walked abroad in perfect security. Then he took possession of the towers and the walls of Jerusalem, for God had led him in safety, through her folly. He destroyed her princes, and every one wise in counsel, and poured out the blood of Jerusalem like unclean water. He led her sons and daughters into captivity. The strange people have gone up to the altar, and, in their pride, have not taken off their shoes in the holy places."

"In his haughty pride," cries the singer in his second psalm, which throws light on the corruption of Israel in the half century before Christ, and on Jewish thought at large, "the sinner has broken down the strong walls with the ram, and Thou hast not hindered. Heathen

aliens have gone up into Thy holy place; they have walked up and down in it, with their shoes, in contempt. Because the sons of Jerusalem have defiled the holy things of the Lord, and have profaned the gifts consecrated to God, by their transgressions of the Law. For this, He has said, 'Cast forth these things from me, I have no pleasure in them.' The beauty of holiness have they made vile; it has been profaned before God for ever!

"Your sons and your daughters are sold into woeful slavery; they are branded, as slaves, on their necks, in the sight of the heathen For your sins hath He done this! Therefore gave He them up into the hands of those that were stronger than they, for He turned away His face from pitying them,—youth, and old man, and child together because they all sinned, in not hearing His voice. The heavens scowled on them, and the earth loathed them, for no man or it had done as they.

"God has made the sons of Jerusalem a derision. Every one gave himself up to the sin of Sodom. They flaunted their wickedness before the sun. They committed their evil deeds before it. They made a show of their guilt. Even the daughters of Jerusalem are profane, according to Thy judgment, for they have defiled themselves shamelessly with the heathen. For all these things my heart mourns.

"I will justify Thee, O God, in uprightness of heart, for in Thy judgments, O God, is seen Thy righteousness. For Thou givest to the wicked according to their works, according to the great evil of their doings. Thou hast revealed their sins, that Thy judgment may be seen. Thou blottest out their memory from the earth. The Lord is a righteous judge, and regardeth no man's countenance. He has dragged down her beauty from the throne of glory. For Jerusalem has been put to shame by the heathen, when they trampled it under foot. Put on sackcloth for robes of beauty, a wreath of twisted rushes instead of a crown. God has taken away her mitre of glory which he put on her brow. Her pride is cast down in dishonour on the earth.

"And I looked, and prayed before the face of the Lord, and said, Let it suffice Thee, O Lord, that Thou hast made heavy Thy hand upon Jerusalem, in the coming against her of the heathen. Because they have treated her with scorn, and have not spared in their wrath and fury, and they will not bring this to an end, unless Thou, O Lord, reprovest them in Thy wrath. For they have not done it in zeal for Thee, but from the wish of their heart, to pour out their rage against us like furies. Delay not, O God, to smite them on the head, that the haughtiness of the dragon may sink down in dishonour.

"I had waited but a little till God showed me his haughty pride brought low, on the shores of Egypt, and his body set at nought by the least, alike on land and sea,—rotting upon the waves in pitiful contempt, and having no one to bury it. Because he had set God at

nought and dishonoured Him. He forgot that he was only a man· he did not think of what might be to come. He said, 'I shall be Lord of sea and land,' and he did not remember that God is great and resistless in His great might. He is King of Heaven, and the judge of kings and rulers, exalting His servant, and stilling the proud in eternal dishonour and ruin because they have not acknowledged Him."

Herod's flattery of Rome, and his treachery, to what the patriots thought the national cause, only intensified the bitterness of such recollections.

Amidst all the troubles of the nation, however, their hopes were still kept alive by a belief which, like much else among the Jews, is unique in history. Their sacred books had from the earliest days predicted the appearance of a great deliverer, who should redeem Israel out of all his troubles. "All the prophets," says the Talmud, "prophesied only of the days of the Messiah." In later days this hope was intensified by a new development of the national literature. In the second century before Christ, the Book of Daniel had created a profound sensation by its predictions, universally current, of the destruction of the heathen, and the elevation of the chosen people to supreme glory, under the Messiah. These were, at that time, interpreted as applying to the disastrous period of religious persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes, which provoked the Maccabæan revolt, and ultimately led to the temporary independence of the nation, with its short, bright glimpse of prosperity, as if heralding the Messianic reign. The heathen were to "devour the whole earth for a time, and tread it down and break it in pieces." But "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the rule under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him." In such words, Israel read its future political glory, as the seat of a universal theocracy, which was to replace the kings of the heathen, and flourish in perpetual supremacy over all mankind. The head of this world wide empire they saw in "the Son of Man," who was to "come in the clouds of heaven;" dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him for ever, being given Him by the Ancient of Days.

With the paling of the Maccabæan glory, after its short brightness, and the decay of religious enthusiasm under the corrupting influence of its later kings,—a reaction not unlike the license of the Restoration as contrasted with the severe Puritanism of the Commonwealth,—a copious literature sprang up, based on the model, which, in the Book of Daniel, had so profoundly affected the spirit of the age. With the independence of the nation, prophecy had, long ago, gradually ceased, for the sphere of the prophet was incompatible with the loss of the freedom of the nation. Zechariah and Malachi had appeared after the return from exile, but, with the latter, it was uni-

versally acknowledged, the grand roll of prophets had ended. The last of the order had, indeed, himself, virtually announced its suspension, in pointing to the coming of Elijah, before the great and dreadful day of Jehovah, as its next appearance. From that time, it became fixed in the popular mind that Elijah, and perhaps, also, a "prophet like unto Moses," would herald the Messiah and his kingdom. The peculiar constitution of the nation inevitably gave this glorious future a political, rather than a spiritual character, for their conception of the kingdom of God was that of a theocracy, such as God Himself had founded amongst them, under Moses—an earthly state, with God as King, and His "anointed" as vicegerent, to carry out His written law. Their only idea of an "anointed one," that is, a Messiah, must have been derived from the illustrations offered by the earlier history of the nation. They knew of Moses, Joshua, the judges, and the kings. The patriarchs were spoken of in the Scriptures as the anointed of Jehovah, or His Messiahs, and so, also, were high priests and prophets, and their kings, and even the Persian monarch, Cyrus. Among the later Jews, of the ages immediately before Christ, "The Messiah" had become the usual name of the Deliverer predicted by the prophets, and was almost exclusively restricted to him. But at no time had the spiritual been separated from the political, in its use. Indeed, the whole theory of their national government, inevitably joined the political and the religious. The State and the Church were, with it, identical, the former being only the outward embodiment of the latter. Jewish politics were only Jewish religion in its public relations, for God was the political as well as religious Head of the nation. It was, hence, all but impossible for a Jew to conceive of the Messiah, except as the divinely commissioned vicegerent of God, in his double sphere of earthly and heavenly kingship in Israel.

The long silence of prophets, and the keen politico-religious enthusiasm with which the advent of a Messiah was expected—an enthusiasm resting on Scripture throughout, but rekindled to a passionate and abiding fervour by the Book of Daniel—incited some nobler spirits to break the stillness, and keep alive the national faith and hope, by compositions conceived in the same spirit. To give them greater weight, they were ascribed to the most famous men of past ages, and sent abroad in their names. A Revelation of the future glory of Israel appeared in the name of the antediluvian Enoch, as one, of all men, worthy to have been favoured with divine communications. Another consisted of psalms ascribed to Solomon, and a third was said to have been written by the great Scribe, the second Moses—Ezra. Others are still preserved in the collection of "Apocrypha" till recently bound up with our English Bibles. Of the whole, the first Book of the Maccabees, illustrates the fervent patriotism and stern puritanism of the war of liberty. The Wisdom of the Son of Sirach sets in a striking light the saying of Esdras, that, even in these dark

days, though many "walked feignedly before God, others feared His name according to His will, and taught His law nobly." No better key to the religious spirit of an age can be had than its religious literature. That of Israel, as the age of Christ drew near, was more and more concentrated on the expected Messiah, and the preparation needed for his coming. The Book of Enoch, the Psalms of Solomon, and the Fourth Book of Esdras, successively reveal the white heat of the national hopes of which they were the expression.

Nothing could be more fitted to influence the excitable imagination of an Oriental people, accustomed to such a style in their sacred writings—nothing more fitted to intensify a fanatical spiritual pride in themselves as the favourites of heaven, or to deepen their hatred of all other nations, than the mystic chapters of the Book of Enoch, of which the earlier date, perhaps forty years before the entrance of the Romans into Palestine, while the whole are as old as the reign of Herod. In one, Israel is painted under the figure of a flock of white sheep, while the nations round are the Egyptian wolf, the Phenician dog, the black wild boar, Edom, the Arabian vulture, the Syrian raven, and the Grecian eagle; or are branded as jackals, kites, foxes, and swine. Hyrcanus, the sheep with the great horn, drives away the Grecian eagles, the Syrian ravens, the Egyptian kites, the Arabian vulture, and the Philistine dogs, who were tearing the flesh of the sheep of the House of Israel. The Lord of the sheep comes to His flock, the rod of His wrath in His hand, and strikes the earth till it quakes, and all the beasts and birds flee from the sheep, and sink in the earth, which closes over them. A great throne is then set up in the beloved land, and the Lord of the sheep sits on it, and opens the sealed books. He will then drive the kings from their thrones and kingdoms, and will break the teeth of sinners, and, finally, chase out the heathen from the congregation of His people, and cast down the oppressors of Israel into a deep place, "full of fire, flaming, and full of pillars of fire." A "great everlasting heaven" will spring forth from the midst of the angels, and the day of judgment will begin, "when the blood of the sinners will be as high as a horse's breast, and as a chariot axle," and when legions of angels shall appear in the skies, and the righteous be raised from the grave. The days of the Messiah —"the Elect," "the Anointed One," "the Son of Man," who is also "Son of God"—will then begin.

"The plants of righteousness" (the Jewish nation) will flourish for ever and ever under His reign, for He is to come forth from the "throne of the majesty of God," and rule over all, as the object of universal adoration.

The pictures given of the blessedness of Israel in its world-wide empire, throw light on the nobler side of the Jewish nature, for we may seek in vain for anything so pure and lofty in the conceptions of any other people. "Blessed be ye, O ye righteous and elect ones, for glorious will be your lot! The righteous shall dwell in the light

of the Sun, and the elect in the light of the Life Eternal; the days of their life shall have no end, and the days of the holy ones shall be countless. And they shall seek the light, and find righteousness beside the Lord of Spirits. The righteous shall have peace with the Lord of the World. They will dwell beside the Water of Life, in the gardens of righteousness, and shine like the light for ever and ever. Their hearts will rejoice, because the number of the righteous is fulfilled, and the blood of the righteous avenged."

The PSALMS OF SOLOMON, written at the time of Pompey's invasion, look forward confidently to the coming of the Messiah, and the setting up of the everlasting kingdom of God, when the sons and daughters of Jerusalem will be brought back again from the east and the west, because Jehovah has had compassion on her affliction. The 17th and 18th Psalms, especially, bring before us, with equal vividness and beauty, the hopes that glowed in the national breast in the days of Christ, and broke out into wild violence in the religious revolt of Judas, the Galilæan. Joseph, in his cottage at Nazareth, may often have listened to them, or read them, for they were familiar to every Jew, and many a group of Galilæan villagers gathered, from time to time, to hear them repeated, in Eastern fashion, by some reader or reciter. They ran thus:—

"Lord, Thou alone art our King for ever and ever, and in Thee shall our souls make their boast. What is the span of man's life upon earth? According to the time fixed by the Lord, and man's hope upon Him! But we hope in God our Saviour, because the power of our God is with mercy, for ever, and the kingdom of our God is over the heathen, for judgment, for ever.

"Thou, O Lord, didst choose for Thyself David, to be king over Israel, and didst swear to him, respecting his seed for ever, that there would never fail a prince of his house before Thee, for ever. But for our sins, the wicked have risen up against us; they (the Asmonean party), whom Thou hast not sent forth, have done violence against us, and have gotten the power over us. They have put away Thy name with violence, and have not glorified it, though it be above all in majesty; they have set up a king over them. They have laid waste the throne of David, with a haughty shout of triumph. But Thou, O Lord, wilt cast them down, Thou wilt take away their seed from the earth, raising up against them an alien, who is not of our race. After their sins shalt Thou recompense them, O God; they will receive according to their works. According to their works will God show pity on them! He will hunt out their seed, and will not let them go. Faithful is the Lord, in all His judgments which He performs in the earth.

"He who has not the Law has desolated our land of its inhabitants. He has made the youth, and the old man, and the child disappear together. In his fury he has sent away our sons to the west; and our princes he has made an open show, and has not spared.

Our enemy has done haughtily in his alien pride, and his heart is a stranger to our God. And he did all things, in Jerusalem, as the heathen do with their idols, in their cities. And the sons of the covenant have been made to serve them, and have been mingled among heathen nations. There was not one among them who shewed pity or truth in Jerusalem. Those who loved the synagogues of the saints fled from them; they were driven away as sparrows from their nest. They wandered in deserts, that their souls might be saved from defilement, and the wilderness was lovely in their sight, in saving their souls. They were scattered over the whole earth, by those who have not the Law.

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up to Israel, their king, the Son of David, at the time Thou, O God, knowest, to rule Israel, Thy child. And gird him, O Lord, with strength, that he may break in pieces the unjust rulers. Cleanse Jerusalem, in wisdom and righteousness, from the heathen who tread it under foot. Thrust out the sinners from Thine inheritance; grind to dust the haughtiness of the transgressors; shatter in pieces all their strength, as a potter's vessel is shattered by a rod of iron. Destroy utterly, with the word of Thy mouth, the heathen that have broken Thy Law; at His coming let the heathen flee before His face, and confound Thou the sinners in the thoughts of their hearts. And He shall bring together the holy race, and shall lead them in righteousness, and He shall judge the tribes of the holy people, for the Lord, His God. And He will not suffer unrighteousness to dwell in the midst of them, nor will any wicked man be let dwell among them. For He will take knowledge that they are all sons of God, and He will portion them out in their tribes, over the land. And the stranger and the foreigner will dwell among them no more. He will judge the people and the heathen, in the wisdom of His righteousness.

"And He will bring the peoples of the heathen under His yoke, to serve Him, and He will exalt the Lord exceedingly in all the earth. And He will cleanse Jerusalem in righteousness, so that, as it was in the beginning, the heathen shall come from the uttermost parts of the earth, to see His glory, and her weary, wasted sons shall return, bearing gifts, to see the glory of the Lord, with which God has glorified her. And He shall be a righteous king over them, taught of God. And there shall be no unrighteousness in their midst in His days, because they are all holy, and their king is the Christ, the Lord. For He shall not trust in the horse, or the chariot, or in the bow; neither shall He gather to Himself silver and gold for war, and He shall not trust in numbers, in the day of battle. The Lord, Himself, is His king, and His trust, in the Mighty God, and HE shall set all the heathen in terror before Him. For He shall rule all the earth, by the word of His mouth, for ever. He shall make the people of the Lord blessed, in wisdom and in joy. And He, being pure from sin, for the ruling of a great people, will rebuke kings, and will cut off

transgressors by the might of His word. And He shall not want help from God, in His days. For the Lord shall make Him mighty in the Holy Spirit, and wise in counsel, and strong, and righteous. And the favour of the Lord shall be His strength, and He shall not be weak. His hope is in the Lord, and who can do anything against Him? Mighty in His doings, and strong in the fear of God; feeding, as a shepherd, the flock of the Lord, in faith and righteousness, He will let no one among them fail in the Law. He will lead them all in holiness, and there will be no haughty oppressing of them in His rule.

"This is the glorious excellence of the King of Israel, which is known to God. He shall raise Him over the house of Israel, to instruct it. His words are purer than the most pure gold. He will judge the people in the synagogues—the tribes of the saints. His words will be like words of the holy ones, in the midst of the holy multitudes. Blessed are those who shall live in those days, to see the good things which God shall do for Israel, in the gathering together of her tribes. God shall hasten His mercy towards Israel. He shall purge us from the defilement of the presence of our enemies, the profane. The Lord, He is King, for ever and ever!

"O Lord, Thy mercy is on the works of Thy hands for ever and ever! Thy goodness to Israel is a gift beyond price. Thine eyes look on, and nothing will fail of Thy promises. Thine ears will attend to the supplication of the needy who trusts in Thee. Thy judgments are in all the earth, in mercy, and Thy love is towards the seed of Abraham, the sons of Israel. Thou hast Thyself taught us, as Thy Son, Thine only begotten, Thy first-born, so that we may turn an obedient heart away from ignorance and sin.

"God shall purify Israel, against the day of mercy and blessing, against the day of the calling forth of His Christ (Anointed) to rule. Blessed are those who shall live in those days!"

In the Fourth Book of Esdras, which was circulating among the people at the birth of Christ, the nation found its strength and weakness, alike, reflected, and all its religious hopes flattered to the utmost. "If Thou for us hast created the world, wherefore is it that we do not possess our world?" asks the supposed Ezra. In the fifth of a series of "Visions of the Night," for which he had prepared by long fasting, he sees an angel rise from the sea, with twelve wings and three heads, the mystic symbol of the triumphant heathen power of the Syro- and Egypto-Macedonian kings, and of that of Rome, under Cæsar, Antony, and Octavian, with whom remained final victory, and universal monarchy. After a time, he, Octavian (Augustus) alone, as the one-headed eagle, remains. But now appears a mighty Lion—the Messiah—who calls to the eagle, with a human voice, "Art thou not he who remainest of the four beasts (the four heathen world-empires of Daniel), which I created that they might rule in my world, that the end of times might come through them?

Thou hast judged the earth, but not in truth, for thou hast troubled the peaceful, and wronged the unoffending; thou hast loved liars, and hast overthrown the cities of the industrious, and hast razed their walls, though they did thee no harm. Thy wrongful dealing has risen to the Highest, and thy pride to the Mighty One. The Most High, also, has remembered His times, and, behold, they are closed, and the ages are ended. Therefore, begone, O thou eagle, and be seen no more—with thy fearful wings, thy baleful wing-lets, thy ferocious heads, thy tearing claws, and all thy foul body, that the earth may be refreshed, and may recover itself, when freed from thy violence, and that she may hope in the justice and pity of Him who made her!" "And I looked, and, behold, the eagle was no more seen, and all its body was burned up, and the earth grew pale with fear." Rome, then just entering on its long imperial history, and in the height of its greatness, was to be blotted out from the earth by the Messiah. Past generations had thought the Syrian persecutions must be the tribulation which was to herald the coming of the Messiah, and to end heathen domination on the earth; then the persecutions and wars of the later Maccabees; then the huge world-turmoil of the Roman civil wars, in succession, seemed to proclaim His approach. But, now, the supposed Ezra looked for it in the reign of Augustus, as men, a little later, expected it on the death of Herod. The Lion, rising from the forest, would rebuke the haughty Roman eagle, and would sit in judgment on the heathen, free His holy people, and bless them till the coming of the end.

Nor was this the only vision of the Messiah, presented by the supposed Ezra. "Behold," says he, "a wind rose from the heart of the sea, and in it the form of a man" (the Son of God), "and all its waves were troubled. And I saw, and behold the man came on the clouds of heaven, and wheresoever he turned his face and looked, all things trembled before him, and all that heard His voice melted like wax in the flame. But a countless host from all parts of the earth came up to make war against Him. And He cut out for Himself, by His word, a great mountain—which is Mount Zion—and stood on the top of it, and when the multitude pressed with trembling against Him, He lifted against them neither hand nor weapon, but consumed them utterly with a flood of fire from His mouth, and the lightning flashes of the storm from His lips, and nothing remained of them but smoke and ashes. Then He rose and came down from the mountain, and called to Him a peaceful multitude, some glad and some sorry, some bound as captives, some bearing gifts, and these were the ten tribes, whom He had brought from their hiding-place in a land beyond Assyria, where never man else dwelt, cleaving the Euphrates to let them pass over, and gathering them to their own land again, that their brethren there, and they from afar, might rejoice evermore together."

To Esdras the reign of the Idumean Herod over the Jewish people, seems a second note of the culmination of heathen rule and its speedy

overthrow. "The end of this age," says he, "is Esau, and Jacob is the beginning of that which is to come;" the death of the Edomite was to mark the opening of the reign of the sons of Jacob. "During his life, or at his death," says another vision, "the Messias (or Son of God) will descend from heaven with those men who have not tasted of death, and the books will be opened before the face of the sky, and all shall see them, and the trumpet shall sound, and every cheek will grow pale at the hearing it. And friends will fight at that time against friends, and the earth shall tremble and all who dwell on it, and the springs and fountains shall cease running for three hours. And the hearts of the people shall be changed, and they will be turned into other men. For all sin and wickedness will be destroyed, and faith will flourish, and corruption shall be rooted out, and truth, which had been lost for a long time, will reign." Regions hitherto unknown and barren will be planted, to shame the heathen, by showing the greater glory of the kingdom of the Messiah than of theirs. Yet, this golden age is to last only 400 years, at the end of which the Messiah will die. The earth will then pass away. The dead will be raised, and the great judgment held, after which "the righteous shall go into the presence of God, and shine like the sun, and dwell in the midst of His everlasting light, and die no more, and a single day shall be as seventy years, and they shall live for ever and ever. But the wicked shall go to everlasting fire."

Such a literature, widely diffused, penetrated the nation with its spirit, and coloured its destiny. Nor were the books quoted the only writings of a similar tone that everywhere formed the reading, and fired the soul of the contemporaries of Jesus. A succession of these heralds of the Messiah perpetuated the theme. After the Psalms of Solomon and the Book of Esdras, we have the anticipations of the Targums, and of Philo, and the pictures of the Book of Jubilees. In the Messiah's time we read in the latter, "the days will begin to lengthen, and the children of men will live longer, from generation to generation, and from day to day, till their lives come nigh to a thousand years. And there will be no more any old, or any weary of life, but they will all be like children and boys, and will fulfil all their days in peace and joy, and there will be no accuser amongst them, or any corrupter. For all their days will be days of blessing."

The result of influences so unique, was almost beyond imagination, in an age so cold and practical as our own. A parallel may, perhaps, be found in the universal excitement which pervaded Christendom at the end of the tenth century, when the 1,000 years of the Book of Revelation were thought to be closing, and the end of the world was believed at hand. The consternation that then seized mankind made men give up everything to be ready for the descent of the judge. It was the one thought. Countless pilgrims sold all, and set off to the Holy Land to await the expected Saviour. Not less deep or universal was the expectation of the Messiah in the days of Christ, rousing

men, even against hope, once and again, in the literal use of the words of the Maccabæan psalm—to take a two-edged sword in their hand, to execute vengeance on the heathen, and punishments on the nations; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with links of iron: to execute upon them the judgments written. This was an honour granted to all the Saints."

The effect of the long reign of Herod on Jewish parties was immense. Sprung from a race which the Jews detested, and the son of a hated father, he had owed it to the Roman Senate that he was able to crush the national liberties under foot, and usurp the title of King of Judea, which no stranger before him had borne. His instincts were cruel and harsh; his life and tastes pagan and sensual; his whole nature opposed to everything Jewish. He had murdered member after member of his family, and among others the last of the native royal race, which the people venerated: he had put to death most of the leading Rabbis; he had filled the land with heathen architecture: he had defiled Jerusalem by a circus and theatre; he had degraded the pontificate by putting two high priests to death, after deposing them; he had violated the tomb of David, in search of treasure; he had burned the national registers, so essential to a people among whom so much in their priesthood and common life turned on their descent; he had burned alive, in his old age, two famous Rabbis, and slain many of the youth of Jerusalem, for their zeal for the Law; and, when dying, he had left a command, to murder, in cold blood, the collected elders of the nation, to fill the land with sorrow for themselves, if not for him, when he was gone.

Against such a master the two great parties, Pharisees and Sadducees,—notwithstanding their differences, above all things Jews,—felt for the time drawn closer together. Except the high priests, who were Herod's creatures, the courtiers who worshipped the power of the day, and the soldiers loyal to a warlike king, few were for Herod. The Sadducees forsook the Court; the High Priesthood was for the time taken from their party. An Alexandrian family into which Herod had married, received it to ennoble them,—men suspected of foreign views, royalists by alliance, and opposed to the people by their origin. For the first time we hear of preachers. The last martyrs under Herod—Judas, son of Saripheus, and Mattathias, son of Margalouth,—were in reality tribunes of the people, to whose stirring addresses, the great riot, in which the golden eagle in the Temple was thrown down, was due. They were burned alive, but men of the same mould took their place, allies and friends of the multitudes who fled to the hills, to emerge from time to time from their hiding places, to harass the troops of Herod. Revolutionary times always produce such men, whom time servers of their day have been wont to denounce as brigands or robbers. They were, however, in reality the Maccabees of their age. "The followers of Judas, the Galilæan," says Josephus, "in all their opinions are at

one with the Pharisees,—that is, with the nation,—but they have an inextinguishable passion for liberty, and will own none but God as Master; they count any tortures that they may endure, however dreadful, as nothing, nor do they heed the sufferings their parents or friends may bear for their sakes"—for they were punished if the offenders themselves were not caught,—"but nothing will make them call any man Master." It was for putting Hezekiah, the father of Judas, to death, in the beginning of his reign, that the Sanhedrim, then still extant, tried to bring Herod to trial, which they never would have done had he been a mere "robber." What the nation thought of his son Judas is shown in the words of a Rabbi, "In the world to come, God will gather round Judas a multitude like him, and will set them before His face." Men of the same type had appeared before Pompey at Damascus, pleading the cause neither of Hyrcanus or Aristobulus, but of the people of God, whose institutions had never favoured royalty. But it was under Herod, and immediately after his death, that these ideas first became the cry of any organized party. The people had tired of the dry and lifeless discussions of the Rabbis. Their subtleties and legal distinctions left their hearts untouched. But men had risen like Hezekiah, Judas of Galilee, Mattathias, and Judas, son of Saripheus, whose harangues set their souls on fire. These earnest spirits did not trouble with barren decisions; they preached and roused They did not dispute about some obscure chapter of Exodus or Leviticus; their texts were the inspired words of the prophets, the burning and eloquent exhortations of Isaiah and Jeremiah. These they recited, commented on, and enlarged, before multitudes eager to hear them. The voice of the Ancient Oracles had retained all its freshness, and suited the passing times as if written respecting them. For Jehoiakim men read Herod; Rome took the place of Babylon; and the gloomy prophecies of Jeremiah seemed about to be fulfilled anew on the second Temple. For the last time, the almost withered tree of Jewish nationality seemed to live again. In the soil of the Word of God it grew green once more, and pushed out some last branches, but all the prophets through whose impulse it thus revived, paid for the dangerous glory by a violent death.

In the lifetime of Jesus parties had thus become transformed. The Boëthusians, or Alexandrians, raised to the pontificate by Herod, became the royalists. They hoped to be able, under him and the Romans, to maintain ecclesiastical matters as they were, and keep hold of their privileges. They were the high-priestly families whose harshness and violence are handed down to us in the Talmud. "A curse on the family of Boëthos, a curse on their spears"—was the anametha muttered in the streets of Jerusalem—"a curse on the family of Hanan! a curse on their viper-like hissings! A curse on the family of Kanthera! a curse on their fine feathers! A curse on the family of Ismael Ben Phabi! a curse on their fists! They are high priests themselves, their sons keep the money, their sons-in-law are

captains, and their servants smite the people with their staves!" "The approaches of the sanctuary," continues the Talmud, "echo with four cries—'Depart hence, ye sons of Eli, you pollute the Temple of the Eternal' 'Depart hence, Issachar Kefr Barkai, who think only of yourself, and profane the consecrated victims,'—for he wore silken gloves to protect his hands in his ministrations. Then, in keen irony, comes the cry—'Open your gates, O Temple, and let Ismael Ben Phabi, the disciple of Phinehas, enter, that he may perform the high-priestly rites! and, finally, a fourth voice—'Open wide, ye gates! and let Johanan, the son of Nebedai, the disciple of gluttons and gourmands, enter, that he may gorge on the sacrifices!'" No wonder this last pupil of his Roman masters won such a name, if the Talmud may be believed in its statement, that he had three hundred calves, and as many casks of wine, and forty seahs of pigeons, set apart for his kitchen.

The luxury and audacity of some of the high priests were pushed so far, that it is related of Ismael Ben Phabi that his mother made a tunic for him, that cost a hundred minæ—about £330. The mother of Eliezer Ben Harsom had a similar robe made for him, if we may credit it, at a cost of 26,000 minæ—£66,000, but it was so fine that the other priests would not let him wear it, because he seemed naked from its transparency. The exaggeration is, doubtless, great, for the fortune of this Pontifical millionaire is a favourite theme of Rabbinical fancy, but such exaggeration itself springs only from truth, striking enough to arrest the imagination. The high priesthood had, in fact, sunk to the extremest corruption. "To what time," asks Rabbi Johanan, "do the words refer—'The fear of the Lord prolongeth life?' To that of the first Temple, which stood about four hundred and ten years, and had only eighteen high priests from first to last? And to what time do the other words refer—'And the years of the wicked shall be shortened?' To that of the second Temple, which stood four hundred and twenty years, and had more than three hundred high priests: for, deducting eighty-five years for five exceptional reigns, less than a single year is left for each of all the other high priests."

The Pharisees and Sadducees, in these dark years, had to withdraw completely from political life, and seek consolation in the study of the Law, and in attracting the people to the schools where they taught or discussed. The extreme party among the former—the Zealots, the Jacobins of the age, or rather its Maccabees—were enthusiastically popular with the youth of the nation. Stern puritans, who knew no compromise, they dreamed of triumphing in their weakness, by the help of God, for whom they believed they fought, over the armies of the mistress of the world. No danger appalled their magnificent devotion, no sacrifice daunted their heroism. They were the rising party, from the time of Herod's death.

Thus, from about the time of Christ's birth, religion became, once

more, the great factor of Jewish national life. The bloody king had died in the midst of rumours of the close approach of the Messiah.

The visit of the Magi, almost immediately before, must have fanned the popular excitement still more, nor would the massacre at Bethlehem be without its influence on the public mind. The insurrection of Mattathias and Judas, at the head of the youth of the city, which, also, marked these eventful months, had only anticipated the theocratic movement, to be made, as all hoped, with success, as soon as the tyrant was dead. The wild outbreaks headed by Simon, the slave of Herod, Judas the Galilæan, and Athronges, the Perean shepherd, were all, more or less, connected with religion. The deputation of fifty Jews, sent to Rome to petition Augustus to set aside the Herods, and permit the restoration of the old theocracy, had aroused the Jewish population of Rome itself. The Rabbis, martyred for destroying the golden eagle, and Judas and his colleague, Zadok, the Rabbi, had, moreover, by their inspiring harangues and appeals to Scripture, as well as by their heroism and the lofty grandeur of their aims, given such an impulse to religious enthusiasm, and created such an ideal of patriotic devotion, that the youth so the country, henceforth, pressed ever more zealously in their steps. Even the old looked on them as the glory of their age. Patriotism became more and more identified with fiery zeal for the Law, and war with the heathen for its sake became the religious creed of the multitude.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

Thirty years of the life of Christ had passed in the seclusion of Nazareth. In early youth He had learned Joseph's trade, and had spent the long years that had intervened, in the duties of His humble calling, for humble it must have been in a provincial town, where there could be no demand for the skill required in great communities, in that age of civic embellishment. It is well for mankind that He chose such a lowly lot. He could sympathise more keenly with the humble poor, from having Himself shared their burden. Nor could labour have been more supremely honoured than by the Saviour giving Himself to life-long toil. Work—the condition of health, the law of progress, the primal duty in Eden, and the safeguard of every virtue in all ages, is touched with a grand nobility by the spectacle of the Carpenter of Nazareth. Idleness, in any rank, becomes doubly a vice from the remembrance of such a lesson.

How these thirty years of obscurity were passed is left untold, beyond the incidental mention of the calling Jesus pursued. Joseph, according to old tradition, died when Jesus was eighteen years old, and it seems certain, from the fact that he is not mentioned in the

Gospels during Christ's public life, that he died at least before that began. From the time of his death, we are told, doubtless correctly, Jesus supported His mother by the work of His hands, at least, in common with the others of the household. It is added that He had grown up with four brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Jude, and at least two sisters, whose names are said to have been Esther and Tamar; but Jude and Simon, and both the sisters, we are told, married before Joseph's death, and settled in the town of Nazareth. Some think that Salome, the mother of James and John, and wife of Zebedee, was Mary's eldest sister; others identify her with the Mary who married Clopas-Alphaeus, a townsman, but he, like Joseph, seems to have died before Jesus began His ministry. This couple seem to have had two sons, James and Joses, but it is not told us whether they had any daughters. The two households formed the family circle of which Jesus was the wondrous centre. Tradition fills up the outline of one or two of those thus honoured—notably of James, afterwards the saintly head of the Church of Jerusalem—a Nazarite from his childhood, and a martyr in his old age. Christ's brothers, Simon and Jude, are also mentioned incidentally; the one as head of the Church of Jerusalem after James' death; the other as having left descendants who were cited before Domitian, as belonging to the kingly race of David. "There were yet living of the family of our Lord," says Eusebius, from Hegesippus, who wrote about the year 160, "the grand-children of Judas, called the brother of our Lord, according to the flesh. These were reported as being of the family of David, and were brought to Domitian. For the emperor was as much alarmed at the appearance of Christ as Herod had been. He put the question, whether they were of David's race, and they confessed that they were. He then asked them what property they had, or how much money they owned. And both of them answered, that they had between them only nine thousand denarii (under three hundred pounds), and this they had, not in silver, but in the value of a piece of land, containing only thirty-nine acres, from which they raised their taxes, and supported themselves by their own labour. They also began to show their hands, how they were hard and rough with daily toil." Domitian then asked them some questions about Christ, and, after hearing their answers, dismissed them in contemptuous silence, as simple fools whom it was not worth while to trouble. The momentary glimpses still left us of the home circle of Nazareth thus show us a group of brothers, partly working a small farm, but all in humble life, and all, alike, marked by so strict an observance of the Law, that, even in their old age, the Jews themselves, and the Jewish Christians, held them in honour on this account.

Communion with His own heart; the quiet gathering in of all the lessons of life and nature around; deep study of the thoughts and hearts of men; a silent mastery of the religious ideas of the day, and a deep knowledge of the religious parties of the people, were daily

advancing with Jesus. But in His spiritual life, in these years, as to the end, solitary prayer and long continued communion with God, where no eye saw and no ear heard Him, were, doubtless, His constant characteristics. The Scriptures read in the synagogues, or studied in the household, were His habitual study, till His intellect and heart were so saturated with their words and spirit, that He knew them better than the Scribes and Pharisees, who claimed to make them their whole study.

He must have been a mystery to His household. He had been so even to His mother from the time of the Temple visit, and He must have become more and more so as He went on His own way, joining no party, silent, thoughtful, self-contained, given to solitude, and with a light in His great eyes that seemed as if they saw into the very soul of those on whom they were turned. His brothers and sisters could not understand Him, even after He had become a public teacher. Alone in that beautiful world of Galilee, with its skies filled with light—its green plains and valleys, wooded hills, and shining sea; amidst a brave, bright, fiery, noble people, and yet so different from them—a faithful son, a patient worker at His daily toil, a friend of children and of the poor and needy, gentle, loving, pure, and yet so wholly apart by His very perfection—we may almost think He must have been avoided rather than sought.

Taught by Joseph and Mary, and in the Synagogue school, Jesus had learned the Hebrew, which had long ceased to be a spoken language, so as both to read and write it. Syro-Chaldaic was the language of the people, and thus His mother tongue; but He must also have gained knowledge enough of Greek, from its being spoken by so many in the different towns of the country, to converse with those who knew no other tongue used in Palestine—such as the centurion or Pilate, or the Greeks who sought an interview with Him in the last week of His life.

Amidst the homely engagements of life in such a sphere, year after year passed quietly and obscurely away. Events around, and in Judea, were not wanting to keep tongues busy in the market place or in the streets, and thoughtful hearts grew daily more so, as to the issue of all that reached them from the great world outside their hills. Meanwhile, the house of Mary must have been the ideal of a happy home in its relations with her mysterious Son. His childlike humility, sunny contentment, stainless purity, watchful tenderness, and transparent simplicity of soul, would find expression in an ever-ready delight in pleasing, an infinite patience, an attractive meekness, and a constant industry. The discipline by which His human character was perfected was not confined to the closing years of His life, when He came before men at large, but began with His childhood and lasted to the end. We grow firm and strong to resist and to do; we gain the mastery of ourselves which brings superiority, by a patient use of the incidents of daily life. To rule one's own spirit on the

petty theatre of a private sphere, creates a power which goes with us to wider fields of action. The principles and graces which stand the storms of public life must have been trained in the school of our daily world. Even to have to wait for thirty years before the time came to begin His great work, was itself a discipline to a holy soul. How must He have sighed over the evils of the times; over the sufferings of His fellow men; over the loss of apparent opportunities; over the long-permitted reign of evil. Enthusiasm burns to go out on its mission, and frets at delay, blaming itself if a moment appear to be lost. But Jesus learned at Nazareth to wait His Father's time. Till "His hour was come" He could control His longings, and wait for the divine sanction, in obscurity so complete, that even Nathanael, at Cana, only a few miles off, never heard of Him till His public ministry had begun, and His fellow-townsmen had no suspicion of His being more than Jesus, the carpenter.

Thus, although retired, these years were in no measure lost. The divine wisdom, which marks out the life of all men, must have especially watched and planned that of the Perfect One of Nazareth. These unknown secluded years teach us that the noblest lives may yet be the most obscure; that life, in the highest sense, is not mere action, but the calm reign of love and duty, towards God and man, in our allotted sphere—that the truest and holiest joy is not necessarily that of public activity, far less that of excitement and noise, but, rather, where the calm around lets God and heaven be mirrored in an untroubled spirit. Compared with the last years of His life, with their agitation and ceaseless labour, Jesus, doubtless, often looked back fondly on the quiet life of Nazareth, where the skies, filled with cloudless light, or the silent splendour of the stars, or the dream of loveliness in all nature, far and near, were only emblems of the heaven of His own soul.

With the growth in years, His riper faculties would find a growing delight in the highest knowledge. Even as a boy, He had shown a divine love of truth, and a supreme devotion to God, which found its natural joy in "seeking and asking" wherever He could hope to learn, whether in the school of the Rabbis, in the Temple, or from townsmen of Nazareth. He had doubtless a premonition of His calling, which urged Him on. Each day more loveable, He would each day become more thoughtful. He might gather much from without, but His soul developed itself mainly from within.

Meanwhile, the time was drawing near for His manifestation to Israel.

Political oppression, by a natural reaction, had waked the hopes of a great national future to an intensity unknown before, even in Israel. But while, at other times, similar hopes had affected only the narrow bounds of Judea, they now went beyond it, and agitated the whole world. They fell in with the instinctive feeling which in that age pervaded all countries, that the existing state of things could not continue.

The reign of evil throughout the world seemed to have reached its height. In Rome, the infamous Sejanus, long the favourite of Tiberius, had at last fallen, but not till his career had filled the world with horror. The enforcement of obsolete usury laws had spread financial ruin over the empire. Forced sales made property almost worthless. Bankruptcy spread far and near. The courts were filled with men imploring a repeal of the obnoxious laws, and, meanwhile, the capitalists kept back their money. Business was paralyzed throughout the world. Many of the rich were reduced to beggary, and the misery of the poor became more intense. To add to the universal ruin, informers reigned supreme at Rome, and even the forms of law were forgotten. Multitudes, both innocent and guilty, perished in the Roman jails,—men, women, and children—their bodies being thrown into the Tiber. To add to all, the vices of Tiberius, fraught with evil to the world, grew daily more monstrous. Old age and debauchery had bent his body, and covered his face with ugly blotches, but his taste for obscene pleasures steadily increased, and, to indulge them, he shut himself up in loathsome retirement. Virtue and life were alike at his mercy: no one was safe from infamous informers. A reign of terror prevailed. Legal murders and remorseless confiscations were increasing; immorality and crime held high carnival. The most distant countries trembled before Rome, but its rule may be judged by the guilt, cruelty, and corruption at the centre.

The misgoverned East, was deeply agitated by the uneasy presentiment of an impending change. Not only Judea, but the neighbouring countries, were full of restless expectation.

Thus, in perhaps the very year in which John the Baptist appeared, the Egyptian priests announced that the bird known as the Phœnix had once more been seen. Originally the mythological emblem of the sun, it had gradually come to be regarded as a representative of the cycles of the history of the world, appearing at regular intervals, to consume itself, and rise anew from its ashes, in mystic indication of the end of one great period and the opening of another. It had appeared under Sesostris, under Amasis, and under Ptolemy, the third king of the Macedonian dynasty. That it should appear now seemed strange, as the intervals of its return had hitherto been 1,461 and 500 years, but it was only 250 since Ptolemy. Meanwhile, the sacred colleges of the capital confirmed what was announced by the Egyptian priests. If the Egyptian consoled himself, amidst the oppressions of the dark Tiberius days, by the fond belief that the mysterious bird was about to bear away the expiring age, the priestly college of Rome reckoned that the great world-year was about to end, and the age of Saturn to return. According to the Augurs, the ninth world-month, and, with it, the reign of Diana, had closed with Cæsar's death, and the last month, that of Apollo, had begun. As, moreover, the secular months were of unequal length, it seemed as if

the end of all things were at hand. Virgil, in the generation before Christ, had already written his Fourth Eclogue, with its pictures of the coming golden age, borrowed from Isaiah, through the medium of the Jewish Sibylline poems, then widely circulated through the world. It seems a satire on his visions of future happy years, that the child, of whom he wrote in such lofty strains, not only failed to bring in a golden age, but died of hunger, under Tiberius, in the very year in which, it would seem, Jesus was crucified. The legend of the death of the great god, Pan, which, according to Plutarch, happened in the days of Tiberius, shows the same deep and boding presentiment, in the ancient world, that a great change was at hand.

"At that time," it relates, "a ship, when off Corfu, was strangely becalmed, and, forthwith, the Egyptian helmsman, Thamnus, heard a loud voice from the Echinadian Islands call him by name, and bid him say, when he got to Palodes, that the great god, Pan, was dead. The Egyptian did as he was bidden, but scarcely had he called out his message over the shore that had been named to him, when there rose, around, a great sighing, and a sound as of wonder, that filled the passengers with awe: the story, when it was told in Rome, troubling the Emperor Tiberius and the people not a little." The great Pan was, indeed, dead, and the other gods wailed over his bier. The oracles and sacred utterances of the time breathe a dark dread of a coming world-catastrophe. The bright day of the Augustan age had long passed. The air over Rome smelt of blood. Murder and suicide were the fashion, and even women were not safe from the dagger. Financial distress brought want to the mass. Even the provinces suffered by the awful monetary crisis. In Palestine, men saw their future king, Agrippa, reduced to the greatest straits for money, borrowing where he could, glad to accept funds secretly offered to gain his influence,—for a time dependent for his very food on Herod Antipas, and, in the end, a fugitive from his usurious creditors. The debtor, the creditor, and the jail, which recur so often in the parables, were illustrations only too vividly realized by the people at large. It was a time of change, transition, universal doubt, uncertainty, and expectation. In the heathen world, men did not know what to think of the future; in Judea, they looked for the sudden appearance of the Messiah. The drama of ancient society had been played out; a vast empire had risen on the ruins of the nationalities that had, hitherto, kept men apart, and its triumphs had discredited the local gods, to whom men had everywhere looked for protection. A calm had followed ages of universal war between city and city, and State and State, and had revolutionized life. Corruption and oppression had followed in the wake of dominion, and had filled the world with vague longings for a higher morality, and the hopes of a nobler religion than the decayed systems around them. The very triumph of one power over all others had, indeed, before all things besides, opened the way for the new faith of

Christ. The isolation of hostile races had been broken down, and the dim but magnificent conception of a brotherhood of men, though, as yet, only as subjects of a universal despotism, had risen in the mind of all peoples. The highways of Rome invited communication with all lands; her government and laws guaranteed order and safety, wherever they obtained; but, above all, she had prepared the world for a religion which should address all humanity, by levelling the innumerable barriers of rival nationality—with their jealousies and impenetrable prejudices, and linking all races into a single grand federation, with common sympathies, and as fellow-citizens of the same great dominion.

It was amidst such a state of things, when the fabric of society seemed dissolving, and the new world had not yet risen from the chaos of the old, that the destined herald of a new moral order was born, apparently, in Hebron. The son of a pure and worthy priest, John, the future Baptist, was, from his birth, surrounded by the influences most fitted to develope a saintly character. Of priestly descent, on his mother's side as well as his father's, he began life with all the advantages of an ancient ancestry, every link of which, in the eyes of his race, was noble. In the society of Hebron, his parents would have a prominent position, and their young son must have been surrounded, on their account, with the respect which insensibly educates and refines. His early education, received at the hands of his father and mother, would take the colour of their position and training. The child would hear, from his infancy, the history of his people, and of the great priestly race whose blood ran in his veins. His genealogy was no doubtful conjecture, but clear and well established through fourteen centuries, lighted up, at intervals, by traditions of famous names, and as famous deeds. The child of strict observers of the Law, he would grow up with a religious reverence for its minutest prescriptions, its feasts and fasts, its Sabbaths, and new moons, its ten thousand rules on meats and drinks, dress, furniture, dishes, conversation, reading, travelling, meeting, parting, buying, selling, cooking, the washing of pots, cups, tables, and person—that slavery of ritualism to which pious Jews gave a trembling and anxious obedience. From his earliest years he would feel that he could not eat, drink, clothe himself, wash his hands or feet, bathe, or perform the most secret function, except by set rules. He would grow up in the ideas of the system into which he had been born, which mapped out his every act, and word, and thought, and denounced every deviation from the all-embracing rules of Rabbinism as a sin, fatal to his caste as a Jew.

As the son of a priest, and, as such, himself a destined priest hereafter, John would early learn all the details of the Temple service, and, doubtless, often went with his parents to the Temple, the glittering pinnacles of which he could see from Hebron. The countless pilgrims at the great feasts: the solemnities of the altar, with its tur-

baned, white-robed, bare-footed priests: the swelling music of the Levites, who, each morning, sang the psalms of the day, in the inner court, to the accompaniment of citterns, harps, and cymbals, and the deep roll of the great Temple organ, whose music the Rabbis, with fond exaggeration, spoke of as heard at Jericho,—would be familiar and dear to him, and the splendour of the newly built Temple, re splendent in snowy marble and gold, would kindle at once his pride and affection. He would, necessarily, rise to manhood coloured by the influences around him, and these all tended to the narrowest Judaism. Living almost under the shadow of the Temple, he was in the centre of all that was most rigid and intolerant; unlike Jesus, whose Galilæan home kept Him in a freer air, far from the dead conservatism of the Temple city, and from the bigotry of its schools and people.

But though thus, by birth, education, and circumstances, naturally, a strict and rigid Jew, higher influences surrounded John, from his birth, than those of mere formalism. His father and mother were both righteous before God, in a higher sense than that of Rabbinical blamelessness. Their religion was deep and sincere, for they were among the remnant in Israel who fulfilled the sacred ideal of the divine requirements: they did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with their God. Their son inherited their finest characteristics. Even from childhood he showed his religious bias. The only son of a priest, he might have passed through life with flattering respect, in the enjoyment of a modest plenty, but he early caught the spirit of the heroes of his race, of whom he heard and read so much in the ancient Scriptures. Disdaining self-indulgent ease, his soul kindled under the influences of home, of the times, and of religion, into a fervent enthusiasm, which formed its loftiest conception of life in asceticism and joyful self-sacrifice. Always more or less in favour with his race, this tendency was more frequent in the Jewish priesthood than in any other of antiquity. Feeling the pulses of the spiritual excitement which throbbed through the people around him: pondering their sufferings, their sins, and their hopes, John gave himself up, though born a priest, to the higher mission of a prophet, and devoted his life to the reform of the evils he so deeply deplored, and to the revival of the religion of his fathers.

His course was, doubtless, in some measure, determined by an act of his parents, before his birth. They had made a vow in his name that he should be a Nazarite all his life, and had thus marked him out as one formally devoted to God, and he freely adopted the vow. The Nazarite, among the Jews, was one, of either sex, consecrated to God as peculiarly His. The conception was the natural development, in earnest spirit, of the self-mortification, for religious ends, by fasts and the like, common to all Eastern races. It had been practised in Israel from the earliest times, and is already formulated as a recognized institution in the Book of Numbers. The Nazarite

was required to abstain altogether from wine and intoxicating drinks, even from vinegar, or any syrup or preparation of the grape, and from grapes themselves, and raisins. All the days of his Nazarite-ship he was to eat nothing made of the vine, from the kernels to the husk. "No razor was to come upon his head;" he was to "be holy," and to let the locks of the hair of his head grow. To guard against any legal defilement from a corpse, he was to go near no dead body, even if it were that of his father, mother, brother, or sister, because the consecration of God was on his head; and if, by chance, death came where he was, the defilement could only be removed by a seven days' "uncleanness," to be followed by shaving his head, and presenting a special trespass-offering. His vow was, moreover, regarded as broken, and he had to begin its fulfilment again.

A Nazarite vow was commonly made for a fixed time, but parents might vow for their infant, or even unborn children, that they should be Nazarites for life. It was thus in the case of John; it had been so with Samuel and Samson, and, according to tradition, in the case of James the Just, the brother of our Lord. But though consecrated to God, and marked as such by special signs, the Nazarite was not a monk, who withdrew wholly from family, social, or civil life, and thus shut himself out from all useful activity. The sound sense of early antiquity had no conception of such selfish devotion. He only shunned certain aspects or parts of common life, though some, of their own accord, carried self-denial farther. Not a few retired into the desolation of the hills of southern Judea, and lived rudely in caves, allowing themselves only the rough fare of the wilderness, and the coarsest clothing. Others, like James the Just, used no oil for anointing, though almost a necessary of life in warm countries, and ate no flesh. The shrinking avoidance of all levitical defilement, which dictated such mortifications, was held due to their special consecration to God, whom such rigid ceremonial purity was supposed to honour. The shunning the sight of the dead was but a repetition of what was required from the levitically holiest man of the nation—the high priest. The abstaining from wine and strong drink guarded against an offence doubly evil in one who had given himself to God, and was a security for vigour and clearness of mind in His service. The uncut hair was, perhaps, a visible sign of the sacred and inviolable surrender of the whole man to Jehovah. The hair was the symbol of manly vigour, its crown and ornament; and its untouched locks thus symbolized the consecration of the reason and higher powers to God. Thus especially "holy," the life-long Nazarite stood on an equality with a priest, and might enter the inner Temple, as we see in the instance of James the Just.

The Nazarite vow was often taken to attain some wish—for health, safety, or success—from God. But where it was for life, no such selfish aims could be cherished. In lower cases, like that of Samson, there might be a vague craving for special favour from God, but in

such as that of John, the impelling motive was intense desire after the highest religious attainments. It was in him a visible and enduring protest against the worldliness and spiritual indifference of mankind at large.

The time of Samson and Samuel, towards the close of the period of the Judges, seems to have been that of the greatest glory of Nazaritism, which prepared the way for the grander era of the prophets, beginning with Samuel, and for the great spiritual movement of the reign of the first kings. Less than two hundred years after David, however, Amos laments the mockery with which the people treated it. Yet Nazarites must always have been numerous in Israel, for the duplicity of the Rabbi Simeon Ben Schelach, in regard to the sacrifices required to discharge three hundred Nazarites from their vow, was the first cause of his disastrous quarrel with Alexander Jannæus. Even two hundred years before, the vitality of the institution must have declined. "I never, through life," said Simeon the Just, at that time, "liked to taste the trespass-offering of a Nazarite. Once, however, a man of the South came to me who had made the Nazarite vow. I looked at him. He had glorious eyes, a noble face, and his hair fell over his shoulders in great waving masses. 'Why do you wish to cut off this magnificent hair, and be a Nazarite no longer?' I asked him. 'I am shepherd to my father,' said he, 'in the town where I live. One day, in drawing water from the spring, I saw my likeness below, and felt a secret pride. An evil thought began to lay hold on me and destroy me. Then, I said, Wicked creature! you would fain be proud of what is not yours, and ought to be no more to you than dust and worthlessness; I vow to my God that I shall cut off my hair for His glory.'" "Forthwith," continued Simeon, "I embraced him and said, 'Would that we had many Nazarites like thee in Israel.'"

The instinct which has led men, in every religion, and in all ages, to adopt an ascetic life, doubtless springs from the belief, that self-denial and the subjugation of the body, leave the soul more free to attend to its special interests. Buddhism is a system of self-mortification, and Brahmanism has its Yogus, or devotees, who aspire, by the renunciation of all that can make life pleasant, to attain union with the Supreme Spirit. Mohammedanism has its fakirs, who seek to subdue the flesh by their austerities, and to strengthen the soul by contemplation and prayer. The Egyptian priests passed their novitiate in the deserts, where, like John, they lived in caves. "The priests in Heliopolis," says Plutarch, "bring no wine into the temple, as it is not seemly to drink by day, whilst the Lord and King, Helios (the sun), looks on; the others drink wine, but very little. They have many fasts, during which they refrain from wine, and continuously meditate on divine things, learn, and teach them."

Reaction from the corruption around, the weariness of the world, natural in a period of universal unquiet and uncertainty, and the wish

to follow out the letter of the law exactly, had led to the adoption of an austere life by many in Palestine. As the Nazarites strove to attain ideal ceremonial purity in rude isolation, others sought it in brotherhoods. Josephus classes as one of the four great parties of his day, the Essenes, an order numbering about 4,000 members, in Syria and Palestine, more or less devoted to an ascetic life. Like the Pharisees, they were a development of the zeal for the Law which had first marked the Hasidim, in the Maccabæan wars. The feverish anxiety to avoid levitical defilement, which had already given rise to Pharisaism, found its extreme expression in these ultra rigid legalists, who hoped, by isolation, to attain ceremonial righteousness impossible in the open world. The strictness and asceticism of others, appeared only a hypocritical effeminacy in their severer eyes. But, even with them, there were grades of strictness, for only the most rigid withdrew from society. The Pharisees had had brotherhoods and unions for generations, and in Egypt there were colonies of "Therapeutæ," who lived a lonely, contemplative, idle life, in the desert, coming together only for common worship and holy meals. But the Essenes were as far from the saintly idleness of the one, as from the restless demagogue activity of the others. The Pharisees, as years passed on, had become constantly less entitled to the name of the Separated, since they eagerly courted the multitude, and compassed sea and land to make a proselyte, and frequented the corners and public places, to make a show of their piety. Ideal legal purity could not be attained by such a life, and hence members who aspired to a higher standard, withdrew, to form sacred colonies by themselves.

The rise of these desert colonies is not known, but the wanderer over the district between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, in the days of John, came, every here and there, on such settlements, in the narrow, shady wadys, sometimes green in their hollows, which sink in great numbers from the high stony plateau, towards the Dead Sea. Their sad appearance, their life strictly regulated by the law, in the least detail, gave them the air of people weary of life, who had withdrawn from the world to prepare for death. They seemed to have given themselves up to a life-long penance, in hope of gaining heaven.

The upper valley of Engedi, where Pliny tells us most of the Essenes had settled, was exactly suited for the monkish life they had chosen. A zigzag path leads from the wilderness of Judea, about three hours north of Masada, by a steep descent of fully 1,500 feet, over loose rocks and stones, to a rich spring, which makes its way under a luxuriant growth of shrubs and bushes, to the Dead Sea. The name Engedi, the goat's spring, may well have been given from the wild goats having first found out and used the steep path. A tropical vegetation supplies the simple wants of life almost without labour. In the upper parts of the wady, and in others running parallel with it, the Essenes found exactly the localities that suited them. Each col-

ony had its own synagogue, its common hall for meals and assemblies, and its provision for daily baths in running water. Besides these settlers, there were lonely hermits, living beside solitary mountain springs, to be able to secure their ceremonial purity still better than their brethren, by more frequent bathing. These anchorets, the precursors of the Christian monks, lived solely on the wild plants of the hill-sides, but, yet, were frequently surrounded by large numbers of disciples, who adopted their painful discipline. Colonies were also formed in various outlying towns of Judea, the members maintaining the same rites as their brethren, and having always ceremonially pure accommodation for them when they wandered from the hills. It seems as if the order had originally lived wholly among men, and had only gradually retired to more or less complete seclusion, as dread of defilement grew more intense.

Their whole day was spent in labour in the field, or in the care of cattle, or in that of bees, and in other useful industries. They thus provided nearly all they wanted, buying what little they required besides, through a special officer. They neither bought nor sold among themselves, but exchanged as each required, and they would hardly use coin, from its bearing an image.

The supreme end of their retirement, either in associations or as solitary hermits, was to keep the Mosaic law with all possible strictness. They read it not only on Sabbath, but day and night, all other reading being forbidden. To blaspheme the name of Moses was the highest crime, punishable with death, and to give up his Books was a treachery which no Essene would commit, even under the agonies of torture or death.

The superstitious dread of defilement, which required the cups and platters of one company of Pharisees to be cleaned for the use of another, was carried even farther by the Essenes. In imitation of the priestly meals in the Temple, from which the "unclean" were scrupulously excluded, they had common meals, morning and evening, before and after the day's work; all novices till the third year, and all who were not of the order, being excluded as levitically unclean. The dining hall was as sacred as a synagogue, the vessels and dishes purified with sleepless care, and even the clothing worn during the meals was counted holy. Priests invoked a blessing over the food, and it was eaten in reverent silence. Whoever became members of the order, gave up all they possessed to it, and the common stock thus obtained, added to the fruit and earnings of the general labour, were shared by all; the old and sick receiving the tenderest care.

The earnestness of the order showed itself in its principles. The novices had to promise "to honour God, to be righteous towards man, to injure no one, either at the bidding of another or of their own accord, to hate evil, to promote good, to be faithful to every one, especially those in authority, to love the truth, to unmask liars, and to keep the hand from theft, and the conscience from unrighteous

gain." Slavery was forbidden, and no oaths permitted, save those by which members were admitted to the order. War, and even the manufacture of weapons, was held unlawful, nor would they even use animal food, since the Law said, "Thou shalt not kill." Trade, except so far as their simple wants required, was discountenanced.

But if their morality, drawn from the Old Testament, was pure and lofty, their slavish devotion to ceremonial observances marked them as the most superstitious of their nation. There were four grades of levitical "cleanness," through which the novice rose only by a long and stern probation, and it was defilement that needed to be washed away by a bath, for the member of a higher grade to be touched by one of a lower. Priests washed their hands and feet before any sacred rite, but the Essenes bathed their whole body in cold water before every meal, and all they ate must be prepared by one of their own number. They bathed, also, each morning, before uttering the name of God. On Sabbaths, they would not even move any vessel from its place, and they prepared all their food on Friday, to avoid kindling a fire on the sacred day. They refused to eat flesh or wine, partly from fear of defilement, partly because they wished to reproduce in their whole lives the strictness of the Nazarites, of the priests during their ministrations, and of the old Rechabites. Thus, their only food was that prescribed to others for fasts. They kept aloof from the Temple, though they sent the usual gifts—for the presentation of an offering involved partaking in a sacrificial meal, which would have defiled them. In some of their colonies women were not suffered, from the same dread of uncleanness, and though they did not wholly forbid marriage, the wife was required to undergo even more ceremonial cleansings than the brethren. They kept a watchful guard that no one was defiled by the spittle of another, and that it did not fall on the right side. The anointing oil, which was to other Jews a festal luxury, in which the Psalmist had gloried, as dropping from Aaron's beard, was, to the Essene, an uncleanness, which needed to be washed away; a brother, expelled from the order, would rather starve to death, than touch food prepared by a common Jew, nor would any Roman torture force him to lose his caste. The whole life of an Essene was a long terror of defilement. The work of the colony began before sunrise, with psalms and hymns, followed by prayer and washing. They then went to their day's work. At eleven—the fifth hour—the scattered labourers gathered again for a common bath in cold water. The woollen dress in which they worked was now laid aside, and the consecrated dress of the order put on, in preparation for their eating together, and their meal, which consisted only of bread and a single kind of vegetable, was eaten with prayer, in solemn stillness. The holy dress was then laid aside, and work resumed. In the evening, the second meal was taken, with the same solemnities and rites, and worship closed the day, that only pure thoughts might fill their souls as they retired to rest. One day followed another,

with the monotony of pendulum beats, in precisely the same round of unbending forms.

The Essenes, as the mystics of Judaism, naturally gave themselves to metaphysical speculations, and, like the Rabbis, they revelled in fantastic allegorizing of Scripture. From the philosophic Judaism of Alexandria, they borrowed notions on free will and fate, and from Persia and Greece, with both of which their race had been, for long periods, in contact, they adopted various dogmas. The soul, they imagined, was a subtle ether, of heavenly origin, drawn down to earth by a fell necessity, and imprisoned in the body till set free at death. It was then borne away, if pure, beyond the ocean, to a region where storms were unknown, and where the heat was tempered by a gentle west wind, perpetually blowing from the ocean. If it had neglected the Law, however, it was carried off to a dark, wintry abyss, to dwell there for ever. Every morning, the Essenes paid homage to the Sun, and they would not, at any time, let its beams fall on anything levitically unclean.

The community of goods among them was a necessity of their mode of life, since the order alone could supply the wants of its members. It had the result of enforcing simplicity. An under garment, without sleeves, was their only clothing in summer, and a rough mantle their prophet-like winter garb. The inter-relation of the different colonies made money useless in travelling, for there was no need of it when, at each resting place, their frugal wants were freely supplied by any brother. They had no servants, and, as they recognized no distinction but that of "clean and unclean," they could have no slaves.

The grand aim of this amazing system of self-denial and ascetic endurance is told by Josephus, in a brief sentence. "Consecrated, from childhood, by many purifications, and familiar, beyond thought, with the Holy Books, and the utterances of the prophets, they claim to see into the future, and, in truth, there is scarcely an instance in which their prophecies have been found false." The belief that they could attain direct communion with God, by intense legal purification and mystic contemplation, and even pass, in the end, to such transcendental vision as would reveal to them the secrets of the future, was the supreme motive to endure a life of so much privation and self-denial. A similar course had been followed before their day, as a means of preparation for divine visions, and communion with higher powers. "In those days," says Daniel, "I was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh or wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled. And on the four-and twentieth day of the month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz." In the same way, Esdras prepared himself, beforehand, for his visions—"Go to the flowery open, where there is no house," said the angel to him, "and eat only

the herbs of the field; taste no flesh, drink no wine, but eat herbs only, and pray unto the Highest continually; then will I come and talk with thee."

It was universally believed that the future was open before the aged members of the order, who had laboured after "purity" through life. Their souls were supposed to be well-nigh freed from the bonds of the flesh, and able to wander forth to the world beyond. Thus an Essene was said to have prophesied his miserable death to the brother of the first Aristobulus; and another to have predicted to the boy Herod that he would be king, and that he would have a long reign, after he had gained the crown. This gift of prophecy was believed by Herod and his sons, no less than among the people, and hence an Essene was often sent for when a bad dream disturbed royalty, or anxiety for the future troubled it. With such mystic claims, the expectations of Israel must have been their chief thought. Their old men dreamed dreams, their young men saw visions, and their sons and daughters prophesied, as if in fulfilment of the prophet's signs of the coming of the Messiah. Yet we have no proof that they anticipated it as near, or applied themselves in any practical way to a preparation of Israel for it. It was only a fond and airy vision of the ideal future. They were rigid Predestinarians, believing that all things, in the course of nature and in the life of man, are fixed by fate. Where there was no moral freedom, it was idle either to preach or teach, and so they did neither.

As was natural with minds occupied mainly with subjects above human grasp, the speculations of the order became wild, and often monstrous. The novice was required by a fearful oath to conceal the secret names of the angels, which were known to the brotherhood, and gave him who learned them power, by pronouncing them, to draw down these awful beings from heaven. The Apocryphal literature of the day boasted of long lists of the names of angels, with their powers and offices; and the Essenes, like the Rabbis, believed that by secret spells, in which these names played a foremost part, they could command their services for good or evil, as the services of the genii are at the command of the magicians in the Arabian Nights. They believed also, in common with the age, in the secret magic powers of plants and stones, and they had much, besides, the disclosure of which was the greatest of crimes. Secrecy was, indeed, a characteristic of the order. The neophyte bound himself by a terrible oath, "neither to conceal anything from the brotherhood, nor to discover any of their doctrines to others, even if he should have to die for his refusal. He had, moreover, to swear that he would communicate their doctrines to no one, except as he himself had received them, and that he would keep inviolably secret the books of the order, and the names of the angels."

The influence of Essenism on the age, however, was small, for its members were few in proportion to the teeming population, and made no attempt at propagandism, but lived entirely apart from men. The

natural product of the times, with its Messianic hopes, its striving after legal righteousness, its glorification of the past, and its contact with heathen superstition, it served the purpose, in some measure, of drawing away the thoughts from the dream of national political glory, and of preparing the soil for the more spiritual conception of the Messiah, which John and Jesus were to introduce. The Essenes came in contact with the people as healers, prophets, dream-interpreters, and exorcists, not as teachers or preachers. Their religious exercises and pure ideas were cherished in the community without an attempt to spread them through the nation;—in marked contrast to the Baptist, whose life was a fervent ministry to the masses of his countryman, and, still more, to Jesus,—for he lived in constant contact with men, even those shunned alike by Essene and Rabbi, as unclean: showed the most perfect superiority to all ritual narrowness; set light by ceremonial purity, or superstitious Sabbath laws; discarded fasting; took part in the social enjoyment of feasts, and meals, and marriages, and left a new code of rules and maxims for His disciples. Essenism was, at best, only the vivid culmination of the past, doomed to pass away, and wholly unfit to create.

From their lofty morality, the Essenes have been assigned a rank among the spiritual forces of their age, to which in reality they had no claim. If their moral purity and spiritual depth, breathed of the prophets rather than the theocracy, and made their order, in so far, a herald of Christianity, their exaggerated ceremonialism, their harsh austerity, and their fantastic and half-heathen superstitions neutralized, to a large extent, this healthy influence. Still, in some directions, they surpassed in true morality anything in the last centuries of Jewish life. It gives even their harsh asceticism a higher dignity, that it was not, like that of the Pharisees, a mercenary service for external reward, but a self-denying attempt to keep out evil from the soul, and thus prepare it for that high communion with God, in whose sacred calm the still small voice of divine revelations grows audible. For the first time since the prophets, the spiritual condition of the soul was declared to be the end of religion. While the Rabbis distracted the age with their fierce party strifes about the merely external, another kind of life ripened in the seclusion of the colonies of Essenes, which bore better fruit, because it concerned itself with the need of a New Birth, and the circumcision of the heart, not with the theocracy, the Temple, or politics. The likeness to Christianity, where it exists in Essenism, was not in its institutions, but in the quiet and meditative frame that breathed through the community in its religious seriousness and priestly consecration of life—the "daily keeping of Sabbath" which was also the ideal of the first Christian communions. These characteristics of the order were, in some degree, common also to those who, after them, were "the quiet and peaceful in the land," although its doctrines and ideas offered, otherwise, rather a contrast to Christianity than a resemblance.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

No one is unaffected by the spirit of his age. It is not surprising, therefore, that at a time when religious earnestness found expression in the ascetic self-denial and retirement from the world of Nazarites, Essenes, and even of others, not connected with either, the young enthusiast of Hebron withdrew from his family and mankind, to the caves of the wilderness stretching away from his native town. In an age so troubled in politics and religion, the peaceful simplicity of such a hermit life was irresistible, and in its calm retirement men could work out their salvation by prayer, fasts, washings, and rigid zeal for the Law, with no one to make them afraid. The weary heart found repose in a solitude, where the great world, with its discord, turmoil, and confusion, its cruelty, selfishness, and treachery, was shut out. The psalm-singing, the ceremonies, and the quiet industry of the colonies of Essenes, sent strange emotions of gentleness and awe into men's hearts, in an age when, everywhere else, wickedness reigned triumphant. In such dark days these spots shone with a holy light. Having fled, in horror, from prevalent violence and sin,—by the natural law of reaction, the fugitives sought to extinguish in themselves the simplest instincts of human nature. It was thus, afterwards, in the awful times of the dissolution of the Roman empire. The deserts of Egypt and Syria were filled with a strange population, fleeing from the wild tumult and commotion under which the earth reeled. It was thus, also, in the fierce and lawless middle ages, when the cloister was like a speck of blue in a heaven of storm. Asceticism, in these different periods, as in that of the Gospel history, was the only protest which told with sufficient force against the rampant evil around. Eleven centuries after Christ, a similar state of society made the ascetic life the ideal of the noblest souls, even where they did not withdraw from the world. St. Bernard's saintly mother, the model of Christian charity and lowliness, could not rest satisfied with these graces. By scantiness of food, by simplicity of dress, by the avoidance of worldly pleasures, by fasting, prayer, and vigils, she strove after that vision of self-sacrifice and humility, which alone was attractive in that age. Asceticism is not needed now. Its place has been more nobly filled by the claims of Christian work for others, but in John the Baptist's day, and for long centuries after, it was a natural tendency.

The wilderness to which John withdrew stretches, far and near, over the whole eastern part of Judea, beginning almost at Jerusalem, and reaching away, under different names, to the Dead Sea and the southern desert, as its distant limits. It is a dreary waste of rocky

valleys; in some parts stern and terrible—the rocks cleft and shattered by earthquakes and convulsions, into rifts and gorges sometimes a thousand feet in depth, though only thirty or forty in width; in others, stretching out in bare chalk hills full of caves, or in white, flint-bound ridges, and winding, muddy wadys, with an occasional reservoir, hewn in the hard limestone, to supply water in a country destitute of springs. One may travel all day, and see no other life than the desert partridge, and a chance fox or vulture. Only the dry and fleshy plants, which require no water, grow on the hills, and in the valleys the most luxuriant vegetation is the white broom bushes, which blossom in March and April. The whole district is, in fact, the slope of the midland chalk and limestone hills, from their highest point of nearly 3,000 feet, near Hebron, to 1,000 or 1,500 feet, at the valley of the Dead Sea. The Hebrews fitly call it Jeshimon—"the appalling desolation," or "horror"—for it is not possible to conceive a more desolate region. Parts of it are deserted even by the Arabs. On the northern side, valleys of great depth, sinking towards the Dead Sea, almost preclude travelling except in their troughs, and farther south, the country is absolutely impassable. Huge perpendicular gorges, of from a thousand to fifteen hundred feet in depth, and in some places nearly a mile in width, have been hollowed out by the great torrents, rushing in winter over the precipices, towards the Dead Sea. The only natural site for a town, in the whole district, is the opening at the foot of the pass of Engedi, the spring of the wild goats, above the shores of the sea, and this is reached only by a narrow, serpent-like path, down cliffs twelve hundred feet high,—well named by the Hebrews, the rocks of the wild goats,—which only unloaded beasts, by an hour's slow care, can descend in safety. Excepting in the spring, at this spot, water is to be found only in hollows of the rocks, or in the very rare water-cisterns, hewn in past ages in the limestone, which catch some of the few passing showers which visit this region.

This "Spring of Engedi"—or "Ain Jidy," gushes from beneath a rock on a little plateau, 500 feet above the Dead Sea, and 1,200 feet below the top of the cliffs. The water is sweet and clear, but unpleasantly warm to the taste. The stream flows in a long cascade over the steep face of the cliff, and is lost in channels for irrigation, beneath,—low bushes, bending rushes, and the gigantic leaves of the osher, the yellow berries of the apple of Sodom, and the flat cedar-like tops of the thorny Darda'ra, rising in a thicket along its course. Bulbuls and hopping thrushes court this shelter, and black grakles, with golden wings, and melodious note, flit to and fro on the cliffs above. On every side, below the spring, ruined garden walls, and terraces, and a large terraced mound, show the site of an ancient town, which had, perhaps, a thousand inhabitants. The scenery along the shore is magnificent in its wild and desolate grandeur. Beneath, is the blue water of the Dead Sea; above, rise the tall crags and castellated pre-

ipices of the great rock-wall, which runs, ever higher and steeper, nearly to the fortress of Masada, the square isolated mass of which, more than 1,500 feet above the Dead Sea, forms a great plateau, cut off on every side by deep gorges, and vertical walls of rock, and seen from Engedi. On the east, beyond the deep gorges of the Arnon, and lesser streams of the Blue Mountains, the white towers of Kerak look down from a great cliff which seems to defy approach.

The town of Engedi was the one minute living spot in the whole region, for the only human habitations in the wild region above were the hill caves, in which hermits sought a miserable shelter. Somewhere in the gorge leading down to the spring, the Essenes had their little colony in John's day, but their strict isolation left the lonely anchorite in a deeper solitude. In the neighbouring wilderness, where the venomous desert viper glided among the stones, and the scorpion, the fox, the vulture, or the raven, were almost the only signs of life: where drought reigned, and the waterless hills and stony valleys were symbols of utter desolation,—in some cave, perhaps, in the depth of a deep and narrow gorge, that at least gave shelter from the pitiless heat and glare of an eastern sun, John took up his abode, to be alone with God and his own soul, and, thus, the better able to fulfil the life-long vow which separated him from men. Bred up a strict Jew, and trained, like St. Paul, in the perfect knowledge and observance of the Law, he was, doubtless, like him, a zealot towards God in all things respecting it. At what age he retired from Hebron to this hermit life, we have no means of knowing, but he had, apparently, lived for many years apart from men before his public appearance. The Gospels furnish us with vivid glimpses of his appearance and mode of life. His hair hung long about him, like Sampson's, for it had never been cut from his birth. His only food was the locusts which leaped or flew on the bare hills, and the honey of wild bees which he found, here and there, in the clefts of the rocks, and his only drink a draught of water from some rocky hollow. Locusts are still the food of the poor in many parts of the East. "All the Bedouins of Arabia, and the inhabitants of towns in Nedj and Hedjaz, are accustomed to eat them," says Burckhardt. "I have seen at Medina and Tayf, locust shops, where they are sold by measure. In Egypt and Nubia they are eaten only by the poorest beggars. The Arabs, in preparing them for eating, throw them alive into boiling water, with which a good deal of salt has been mixed, taking them out after a few minutes, and drying them in the sun. The head, feet, and wings, are then torn off, the bodies cleansed from the salt, and perfectly dried. They are sometimes eaten boiled in butter, or spread on unleavened bread mixed with butter." In Palestine, they are eaten only by the Arabs on the extreme frontiers; elsewhere they are looked on with disgust and loathing, and only the very poorest use them. Tristram, however, speaks of them as "very palatable." "I found them very good," says he, "when eaten after the Arab fashion, stewed with butter.

They tasted somewhat like shrimps, but with less flavour." In the wilderness of Judea, various kinds abound at all seasons, and spring up with a drumming sound, at every step, suddenly spreading their bright hind wings, of scarlet, crimson, blue, yellow, white, green, or brown, according to the species. They were "clean," under the Mosaic Law, and hence could be eaten by John without offence. The wild bees in Palestine are far more numerous than those kept in hives, and the greater part of the honey sold in the southern districts is obtained from wild swarms. Few countries, indeed, are better adapted for bees. The dry climate, and the stunted but varied flora, consisting largely of aromatic thymes, mints, and other similar plants, with crocuses in the spring, are very favourable to them, while the dry recesses of the limestone rocks everywhere afford them shelter and protection for their combs. In the wilderness of Judea, bees are far more numerous than in any other part of Palestine, and it is, to this day, part of the homely diet of the Bedouins, who squeeze it from the combs and store it in skins.

John's dress was in keeping with the austerity of his life. A burnouse of rough, rudely woven cloth of coarse camels' hair, such as the Bedouins still wear, bound round his body by the common leathern girdle still in use among the very poor, was apparently his only clothing. His head-dress, if he had any, was the triangular head-cloth, kept in its place by a cord, as is still the custom among the Arabs, and his feet were shod with coarse sandals. In Hebron he had had around him all that could make life pleasant—a saintly home, loving parents, social consideration, modest comforts, and an easy outlook for the future. But the burden of life had weighed heavy on him, and his heart was sad, and drove him forth from men. The enemies of his people were strong, and the hand of them that hated them lay sore upon them. The cry of the faithful in the land rose to God, that He would remember His holy covenant and deliver them. They sighed to be free from the presence of the heathen, that, once more under God as their only king, with their country to themselves, they might serve Him without fear, in the homage of the Temple, and the rites of the Law. Israel had long sat in darkness, with no break of light from heaven. The promises seemed to tarry. The godly sighed to have their feet guided into the way of peace, but no Messiah had appeared to lead them.

But if the sorrows of the nation pressed on the heart of John, so, also, did their sins. If the "shadow of death" thus lay on them, it was through their own sins and degeneracy, for God had only forsaken them because they had first forsaken Him. The courts of His Temple had been turned into a den of thieves; the spiritual guides of the multitude were deceitful and deadly as the viper of the desert; blind leaders of a blind people. They who should have been the holiest of the holy—God's priests—were a scorn and derision for their unworthiness. Before John reached his majority, he had seen the

sacred mitre changed nine times, at the will of Archelaus, or of a heathen governor from Rome, and the puppet high priests had desecrated its awful dignity by personal vice, or time-serving policy, or indifference to its highest obligations, or shameful luxury and haughty pride. Two of the family of Boëthos of Alexandria, raised by Herod to dignify his marriage into the house, had worn the high priests' robes, but the people muttered curses on them, for having surrounded themselves with courtly show and military violence. Ismael, the son of Phabi, had worn them, but the clubs of his retainers had become a by-word in Jerusalem, as had his own shameful personal luxury. Three members of the family of Hannas had worn them—Hannas himself, Eleazar, his son, and, now, Caiaphas, his son-in-law,—and Hannas was still the foremost man in Jerusalem, but they hated the people, and the people hated them, and maintained that they hissed at them like vipers, in their proud malignity, or glided to their evil ends, like the snake. Their families were branded as Sons of Eli. Iniquity filled the high places of the Hill of God. Nor were the people themselves innocent, for He who was meek and lowly in spirit denounced them, a year or two later, as an evil and adulterous generation, more hardened and hopeless than Nineveh, or Sodom and Gomorrah, which God had cursed. Earnest souls, in such circumstances, with the earth dark around them, and no light in the heavens; feeling that hope could only come with national contrition, and awakened spiritual life, might well, in loving, sad despair, withdraw themselves from mankind.

But with John there was also a conviction that the Messiah, long expected, must be near at hand, and that the fit preparation for His advent was a self-denial and humiliation, which surrendered the whole present, and gave itself up to prayer and watching, in desert solitudes. It was the idea of his age, and John could be satisfied with nothing less. A great sorrow and a great ideal alike drove him to "keep his body under," as if the least pleasure were sin, and the flesh the enemy of the soul.

Josephus gives us a sketch of one of the recluses of the desert, with whom he himself lived for three years. "His name was Banus, his home the desert, his only clothing the leaves or bark of trees, his only food what grew of its own accord, his only drink the brook, and his daily and nightly practice, to bathe in cold water." Not a few such, no doubt, buried themselves in the dens and caves of the lonely hills round John, weary of the world, as Pliny says, and seeking, by a life of penitence, as he calls it, to cleanse away the defilements of the flesh.

With many, the great motive might be to save themselves in the shipwreck of all besides, but no such unworthy impulse actuated John. He sought the wilderness, at once to secure perfect levitical purity, for he was a strict Jew—to ponder over the mysteries of the long-delayed kingdom of God, and to aid in bringing about its ac-

complishment. His life, so earnestly striving for meetness for the new Messianic kingdom, was no vacant and idle solitude. He had nothing of the Eastern mystic, whose cell witnesses only dreamy and selfish meditation. The struggles of soul, in all natures like his, were unspeakably real, and we cannot doubt that his days and nights saw him pleading, by long earnest prayer, with many tears and sore fasting, that God, in His mercy, would, at last, send the Messiah to His people. We know how even Christ, "in the days of His flesh, offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears;" how He sighed deeply in His spirit, and spent whole nights in the hills, or in the desert, in lonely prayer, and His herald must have felt, in his measure, the same all-absorbing zeal. The prophets and Rabbis, alike, taught that the "Kingdom of Heaven" could only come when Israel had prepared itself by humiliation and repentance, and John sought to rouse men at large to feel this, by the protest against their sins, embodied in his example. To rebuke love of riches would have been idle, had he lived in comfort; to condemn the hollowness and unreality of life, he must be clear of all suspicion of them himself. Men involuntarily do homage to self-denying sincerity, and there could be no question as to that of John. It was felt that he was real. Religion had become a thing of forms. Men had settled into a round of externals, as if all religion centred in these. Decencies and proprieties formed the substance of human life. But John showed that there was, at least, one man with whom religion was an everlasting reality.

A soul lost in the greatness of eternal truths, like that of John, may well have risen to an indifference to the comforts, or even ordinary wants of the body, otherwise almost impossible. We have no record of his daily life, but that of one who, in saintliness of spirit, trod in his steps, it still preserved. Saint Antony, in the deserts of Egypt, was wont to pass whole nights in prayer, and that not once, but often, to the astonishment of men. He ate once a day, after the setting of the sun; his food was bread with salt, his drink nothing but water. Flesh and wine he never tasted. When he slept, he was content with a rush mat, but mostly he lay on the bare ground. He would not anoint himself with oil, saying that it was more fit for young men to be earnest in subduing the body, than to seek things which softened it. Forgetting the past, he, daily, as if beginning afresh, took more pains to improve, saying over to himself, continually, the Apostle's words—"Forgetting what is behind; stretching forth to what is before;" and mindful, too, of Elijah's saying, "The Lord liveth, before whom I stand"—he said, in himself, that the ascetic ought ever to be learning his own life from that of the great Elias, as from a mirror. The picture may not suit in some particulars, but as a glimpse of the mortified life of the desert, in its best aspect, it may serve to realize that of John, in the loneliness of the rough wilderness of Judea.

In its rugged solitudes, his soul gradually rose to the consciousness of a great mission. He believed that the wrath of God was near at hand, to take vengeance on the unrighteousness of men, but he knew that the God of Abraham, even in wrath, remembers mercy, and that, with the judgments, there would come the long-promised deliverer. His impetuous nature, and a heart that never feared the face of man, raised him to the level of the old prophets, and impelled him, like them, to address his generation. Instinct with the deepest religious feeling; of a transparent simplicity, and reverend truthfulness of word and bearing; glowing with energy: a living embodiment of sincerity and self-denial, and in the best position, from his earliest years, to know the age, he was, above all men, fitted to rouse the sleeping conscience of Israel, and to lay bare the self-deceptions and sins of even the religionists of the day. Though a hereditary priest, he had stood aloof from the Temple service, for its mechanical rites gave him no inner peace.

From the Temple aristocracy he shrank with a special aversion, for the guilt of the nation culminated in them. Under the mantle of legal purity, and behind the cheap popular sanctity of the Pharisees, his quick eye saw, at a glance, hateful ambition, greed, and hypocrisy. The nation itself stirred his soul, as he saw it, in a time so earnest, contenting itself with Pharisaic righteousness, and trusting, with insane self-complacency, to its being the people of God. In his loneliness, his soul had communed much with the prophets of the Old Covenant, and found in their holy zeal for Israel and God; in their demand for a higher righteousness of the heart and life, instead of sacrifices of beasts; in their lofty announcement of a divine future for his nation, if it prepared itself for it, the prophetic longing and prophecy of his own spirit. That he never names Moses, shows that he must have passed beyond the Law, to the prophets. Isaiah, especially, had excited in him a faith so deep and intelligent that Jesus rebuked his fears, when perplexed and doubting, by a quotation from that prophet's Messianic predictions. The few fragments left of his preaching abound in figures borrowed from this, his favourite Book—the viper brood, the trees of God's vineyard, the felling that which was barren, the consuming fire, the threshing floor and the winnowing shovel, and the giving bread and clothing to the poor.

John's life in the wilderness seems to have been no short retirement. His whole later bearing, his mode of life, his sad passionate earnestness, and even his lofty resolve to come forth as a prophet, imply a long abode in the solemn freedom of the desert, far from the distracting and enfeebling tumult of life. But, though in the same wilderness, he was no Essene. His relation to the people at large, his conception of a kingdom of God in their midst, his later preaching to them, his sympathy even for publicans and sinners, from whom the Essenes and Pharisees shrank as pollution; even his food, which, though simple, was still, in part, of flesh, show that he was in no way

connected with that order. Like its members, he was unmarried; like them, he denied himself all indulgence, and showed a prophet-like grandeur in his standard of aim and practice. But though their settlements were close at hand, and were open to him, he chose to live free and alone. It was well he did so, for this freedom created an impulse before which the nation trembled and lived, while Essenism, with no vital power beyond itself, left it to lie dead.

The fundamental principle in John's seclusion was, in fact, exactly the reverse of that of the recluses of his day. They dwelt apart from men, to seek their own spiritual good with a pious and cynical selfishness. John sought the wilderness by an impulse which seemed like the voice of God, to seek, in its loneliness, a loftier spiritual life than seemed possible amidst the religious decay of the time. As a Jew, he had not risen above the external and material in religion. An earnest, strong, all-embracing heroism of self-denial, which proved its depth by its self-inflictions; a rejection of all temptations of society and culture, with their threatening possibilities of defilement: a strenuous war against nature, in every appetite, to the extent of enduring the privations of hunger, homelessness, and exposure, were, at once, the discipline by which he struggled against the "uncleanness" he still lamented, and the aids by which he hoped to attain nearness to God. Yet he was far from caring only for himself. His future career, and his very clothing, which was that of an ancient prophet, showed that he carried the burden of his people on his soul, and had fled from the crowd to entreat God for them, by prayer and penitence, and, in accordance with the ideas of his time, to prepare, on behalf of all, by holy fasts, for gracious revelations from heaven.

This revelation, he, in fact, received. He already saw that the times were ripe for the judgments of God. The slavery to heathen Rome had followed the agony of the days of Herod, and had dispelled every hope. For nearly a generation he had seen nothing but misery in the land. In his boyhood the census of Quirinius had drenched the country in blood, and had been followed by such oppression as had, already, in his early manhood, exhausted the resources of the nation, and caused a despairing appeal to Rome for relief. Rapacious and unjust governors, true Roman knights, seeking only their own fortune, and rioting in the abuse of their power, had added burdens on their own account; the officials and soldiers had only too faithfully copied their lawless violence; heathen garrisons occupied the Holy City and the Temple; the high-priesthood had become a mere sport of those in power, and all the sanctities of the national life had been mocked and outraged in turn. Since the year 26, Pontius Pilate had been governor, a man to be compared only to Gessius Florus, the last Roman Procurator, whose enormities at last roused the war of despair in which Jerusalem perished. Pilate wilfully set himself to insult and violate the sacred customs. It was beneath him to study the people he ruled. Not merely harsh, and hot-headed·

carrying matters haughtily even towards Antipas and the sons of Herod—he was malevolent, and ever on the watch to gratify, by cunning and venomous threats, the hatred rankling in his breast against a race he did not understand, and who defied him. The people of Jerusalem suffered at his hands a series of provocations without end, of malicious injuries, brawls, and massacres. So envenomed was he, indeed, that even when he saw his mistake and trembled before Tiberius, he would not yield, because he could not consent to do his subjects a pleasure. Philo, his contemporary, charges him with accepting bribes, with acts of wanton violence, with robberies, with shameful treatment of many, wanton insults and threats, continual executions contrary to law, and aimless and grievous cruelties. "He was a malicious and furious man," says Philo, "unwilling to do anything that he thought would please his subjects." The nation looked back even on Herod's days with regret, so much worse had become its state, now that it was trodden under foot by the Romans, and saw no hope of relief. John had noted all this. Living close to Jerusalem, he had been amidst it all; unlike Jesus, who had lived far off in Galilee. He had shuddered at the spectacle of infidel high priests—mere Sadducees, culminating now in Caiaphas, whom the people hated, but Pilate liked, or, at least, endured. He had learned to despise the bulk of the Rabbis, who tamely bowed to the shameful yoke they had invoked, and submitted to it from interest. Nor were the people better than their leaders. They lived in the day dreams of a merely outward piety, with proud and mercenary hopes of a rich earthly reward for it from the Messiah.

Amidst such mingled crime, wickedness and corruption, the soul of John was filled with humiliation and grief. The Holy Law, given at Sinai, had sunk to a superstitious creed, and was only tolerated by Rome: the sceptre of the nation was broken in pieces, though it had been promised that it would be everlasting: the holy hill had become the citadel of an uncircumcised soldiery, and the streets, which had echoed to the minstrelsy of David and his sacred choir, were invaded by the ensigns and music of a Gentile nation. It seemed as if God must presently appear. He had never before remained for centuries without baring His Mighty Arm: He had never before endured, thus, the derision of the heathen, or the sin of His people: He had never before left them to perish as now. For His own name sake He would assuredly appear. The prophecies of Daniel had predicted only a short triumph to the iron kingdom, Rome, and it had now lasted for a generation. But even in these last days, had not the curse on the house of the Idumean, the destruction of Antipater, Phasael, Herod, Archelaus, and many others of the hated race, shown that the wrath of God was kindled, and that His avenging judgments were on the way? The judgments of God, foretold by the prophets, must speedily fall, alike on apostate Israel, and on her enemies.

What John had foreboded in Hebron or Jerusalem became a cer-

tainty to him in the wilderness. The lonely vastness raised him above anxious contrasts of the weakness of Israel and the might of Rome, which might have paralyzed resolution, and bidden hope despair. The solemn stillness of the hills, and the boundless sweep of the daily and nightly heavens, effaced the thought of man, and filled his soul with the majesty of God. What was man, whose days were a handbreadth, and whose foundation was in the dust, before the Mighty Maker of Heaven and Earth—the rock of Israel? He had often appeared to deliver His people when their case seemed hopeless. And did not the judgments of God, in the prophets, always come laden with hidden good? Were not cursing and blessing, smiting and healing, death and resurrection, always joined in His visitations? John's own history in the wilderness gave him hope for his race. His prayers, his penitence, his renunciation of the world, his life devoted to God, had removed the burden and agony of his soul, and he had found peace, and rest, and grace, and heavenly light. What he had felt was possible for all Israel. If they could only be brought to resolve, to turn, to repent, to live a new life, their repentance would bring down showers of blessings, as it had always done in the past, and the lightnings and thunders of judgment would break in wrath on their foes, but in heavenly help to themselves. The repentance of Israel would bring the Messiah. He knew He was near. It had been revealed even before his birth that he himself was to go before Him, in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord. The call of God rang in his soul like a trumpet, to go forth and preach to the people the coming of the expected Deliverer, in judgment to the impenitent, and grace to the contrite. Led by the Divine Spirit, through long years of spiritual struggle—his soul turned inward on itself and upward to God—his body subdued by long exposure and privation, and his whole being raised to a lofty invincibility of purpose, untamed by customs, unweakened by compliances, but filled with meditation and high religious life—he had, at length, felt equal to taking the sublimest and most terrible position into which a frail man could be raised by the Almighty—that of the herald predicted by his favourite Isaiah, to pioneer the way for the Messiah of God. He was to fill up the valleys, and make low the mountains and hills, to make the crooked places straight, and the rough places even; that is, to rebuke the lofty and proud, to raise up the humble and oppressed; to spare none of the crooked policies and ways of men, and to smooth down their roughness by a hearty repentance, so as to fit them for the peaceful entrance of the Christ.

The kingdom of God, as thus realized by John, was far higher and grander than previous conceptions. In his infancy, Judas, the son of Saripheus, and Mattathias, had sought to bring in the reign of the Messiah by a political rising, which had been quenched in blood. In his boyhood, Judas, the Galilæan, had, in the same way, appealed to force, for the same end, but had only covered the land with

mourning. Yet the party with whom a religious war with Rome had become a fanatical creed, was daily increasing. Even in Samaria, it was proclaimed that the kingdom of God was about to come, and that it would take an outward political form. The misery that had roused Judea had also pressed heavily on the Samaritans, and their national jealousy of the Jews anticipated a share in the expected Messianic glory. In their opinion, they, and not the Jews, held the real Holy Land promised to Abraham—the land where the patriarchs had fed their flocks: they had the true Temple Mount, and the true Law, free from the corruptions of the prophets; upon their holy mountain Moses had buried the true vessels of the Tabernacle, which the Jews claimed to have possessed under the Temple of Solomon, and which, they asserted, had been miraculously hidden, after the Temple had been destroyed by the Chaldeans. The possession of these vessels was all important, for, with the fondness for outward embodiments of belief common to the East, it was held that the place where they were hidden would be the scene of the proclamation of the Messiah. A cherished promise, they avowed, announced that when the kingdom of the Messiah was set up, the Ark, and these sacred vessels, would be again brought forth. Jeremiah, so ran the Jewish tradition, being warned of God, commanded the Tabernacle and the Ark to go with him to Mount Nebo, and there he hid them and the altar of incense in a hollow cave, and stopped the door, which none who went with him could afterwards find. Jeremiah thereon told them that it would be "unknown till the time when God gathers His people again together, and receives them to mercy. Then shall the Lord show them these things again, and the glory of the Lord shall appear, and the cloud also, as it was shown unto Moses." A fuller version of this tradition introduced an angel as the chief actor, instead of Jeremiah. Shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, it went on, this heavenly being descended to Jerusalem, alighting on the Temple, to save it. Having prepared the Tabernacle, the Ephod of the High Priest, the Ark, the Two Tables of Stone from Sinai, the Golden Robes of the High Priest, the Altar of Incense, the Urim and Thummim, and the holy vessels, for removal, he carried them to a secret place, and cried with a loud voice, "O earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the mighty Lord, and receive what I commit to thee, and keep it to the end of the times, to restore it again when thou art commanded, that the stranger get not possession of these things. For the time will come when Jerusalem shall arise again, to endure for ever!" Then the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up all. A third version, used figuratively in the Apocalypse, supposes the holy vessels to have been taken to heaven and hidden there. He who overcomes is to eat of the manna which is hidden in Heaven, and when "the Temple of God was opened above, there was seen in it the Ark of the Covenant."

The Samaritans, treasuring these fancies no less warmly than the

Jews, gave them a local colour, and had persuaded themselves that the true place of the mysteriously hidden treasures was the top of Gerizim, beside their own city—the hill from whose top the tribes of Israel had sounded the blessings of the Law, on the entrance of Joshua into Canaan.

How intensely such thoughts were fermenting in the minds of the Samaritans in these years was shown a little later, when John's mission had closed without bringing them the results they had expected; for what then took place was only the final outburst of feelings long pent up. "A man," says Josephus, "who made nothing of falsehood, and tickled the multitude by whatever seemed likely to please them," had determined, if he could, to raise a popular movement, like that of John's, which had swept over Judea and Galilee, with the hope, most probably, of being able to turn it to political account. Sending abroad a report through the valleys of Samaria, that a new prophet would reveal, on a fixed day, on Mount Gerizim, the place where Moses had hidden the vessels of the Tabernacle, he raised an uncontrollable excitement. The announcement implied that the kingdom of God would on that day appear, for the sacred vessels were to remain hidden till it was to begin. It was a crafty scheme, to transfer to Samaria the boastful hopes which had been the glory of Judea, by making open claim to the possession of the mysterious treasures, and of the Law in its purity. Thousands gathered on the day appointed, between Ebal and Gerizim. New caravans continually brought fresh numbers to Tirabatha, the village named by the prophet as the rendezvous, till the matter became serious in its possible political results, since the "elders" of the people identified themselves with the movement. Pilate was alarmed, fearing that the multitude might be easily led from a search for the sacred vessels to open sedition. His brutality had, in fact, already made them ready for it. He therefore forbade the pilgrimage, and placed posts of foot and horse at all the approaches to Gerizim, to prevent them ascending it. But the vast multitude, many of whom were armed, would not be baulked, and tried to force their way to the sacred spot. Pilate, on this, ordered the troops to disperse them: fierce fighting followed, in which many were killed, the rest taking to flight, the principal men among the prisoners, taken during or after the battle, being put to death.

This tragical incident took place a few years after John's appearance, but it was of a piece with the popular feeling respecting the Messianic kingdom, which was mixed up with the politics of the day. John kept entirely aloof from such views. If, as a Jew, he hoped that Israel would hereafter be exalted under the Messiah, he left that for future disclosure, and confined himself exclusively to the moral and spiritual. He was no political agitator, no revolutionary, like Judas the Galilæan: his Messianic kingdom, like that of Jesus, was, at least for the time, a kingdom not of this world.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE NEW PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius, which fell between August, A.D. 28, and August, A.D. 29, the Roman empire lay under the shadow of the darkest years of the tyrant, now an old man of seventy-one. Among those alive at the time, and remembered since, for good or evil, the elder Pliny,—afterwards, when a Roman admiral, killed at the first eruption, in historical times, of Mount Vesuvius—was a child of four; Vespasian, hereafter, with his son Titus, to crush Jerusalem, was full of the ambitions and dreams of a youth of 19; Caligula, one day to horrify the world by the spectacle of an insane despot at the head of the empire, was a lad of 16; Claudius, one day to be emperor, was a poor lame, trembling man of 38, and among the marriages of the year was that of the daughter of the ill-fated Germanicus, from which, nine years later, was born NERO. Things were very peaceful through the empire, for the only wars at the moment were with the Thracians, on the east of Europe, and with the Frisians, in the Dutch swamps on the north-west. Pontius Pilate had been two years procurator of Samaria, Judea, and Idumea, Herod Antipas had been reigning for about thirty-two years over Galilee and Samaria, and was now a man of about 50, and Philip, his brother, about the same age, and of the same standing as a ruler, was still tetrarch of the rest of the land, beyond the Jordan, living a quiet life, usefully and worthily.

Excepting the religious rising of Judas, and the other confusions after Herod's death, and at the time of the census by Quirinius, Palestine had enjoyed nominal peace for nearly sixty years. New cities and towns, with all the elegancies and splendour of Roman civilization, had risen all over the land—Cæsarea, with its docks, piers, warehouses, and broad streets, on which a splendid temple to Augustus, seen far off at sea, looked down. In Jerusalem, the great Temple, four huge castles, the theatre, the circus, and Herod's new palace, had risen. Samaria had been rebuilt with great splendour, and re-named Sebaste, the Greek equivalent of Augusta, after the Emperor. The old Kaphar Saba, on the inner edge of the sea plain, behind Joppa, had been rebuilt, and re-named Antipatris, after Herod's father. Near Jericho, two towns—Kypros, named after Herod's mother, and Phasaelis, after his brother, had been created. Anthedon, close to Gaza, on the sea coast, had been raised from its ruins, and called Agrippeion, after Agrippa, the son-in-law of Augustus. Two great fortresses had risen, called, after Herod, Herodion,—one in the hills on the south border, the other, three hours from Jerusalem, at the head of the descent to the Jordan valley, where

Herod had once had a sore struggle with the rebellious Jews who pursued him. The passion of Augustus for obliterating the traces of the great civil wars throughout the empire, had everywhere been flattered by creations which at once beautified the land, and defiled it by their heathen accessories. In the far north, Philip, after his father's death, had re-built Paneas, in the green lap of Mount Hermon, and called it Cæsarea Philippi, in flattery of the emperor, and on the north-east of the Sea of Galilee, he had embellished the old Bethsaida, and re-named it Julias, after the daughter of Augustus. In Galilee, Herod Antipas had re-built Sepphoris, and surrounded its hill with strong walls; in the sheltered green plain opposite Jericho—the valley of the Acacias, of the days of Joshua—he had built a fine town known as Livias, in compliment to the unworthy wife of Augustus, and within the last ten years he had built the splendid new capital on the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and called it Tiberias, after the new emperor. Even the gross and sensual Archelaus had copied to some extent his father's example, for a new town had risen on the west side of the Jordan, amidst palm groves elaborately irrigated, and called after himself, Archelaïs.

The "Roman peace" which was destined to prepare the way for Christianity, by breaking down the barriers between nations, and fusing the civilized world, for the time, into one mighty commonwealth, had thus borne fruits on all sides, though mis-government was silently undermining the whole imperial system. The East was in profound peace. The Parthian cavalry hosts, who were the terror of the age, had not watered their horses in the Euphrates, or dared to cross it, for two generations. But they still swarmed over the plains of Parthia, and only waited the orders of the court of Ctesiphon, to dash in on the exposed territory of Palestine. Four legions, held in reserve in Syria, and a strong line of military posts along the Euphrates, at the thought of being ordered to which the Roman military youth shuddered, as a banishment from the world, barely sufficed to hold these fierce Cossacks of the age in check. The terror they had inspired in their last invasion was still unabated, for even St. John, forty years later, in the Apocalypse, saw four destroying angels bound in the great river Euphrates, who were loosed to slay the third part of men. Two hundred thousand horsemen in fiery, blue and brimstone-coloured mail, rode forth through the dried up river-bed, an army of hell, to destroy mankind—symbols taken, unquestionably, from the remembrance of the Parthians. The Roman historians use language hardly less striking of the endless rushing swarms of wild cavalry—their terrible shouts, like the bellowing of beasts, and the hideous clamour of countless drums, like the noise of thunder; their breastplates and helmets of steel glittering like lightning, their horses covered with brass and steel trappings, the faces of the soldiers painted, and their shaggy hair gathered in a mass upon their foreheads, after the Scythian fashion. Their dreadful lances,

their feigned retreats, their resistless arrows, the clouds of dust they raised by their charges, hiding the battle-field,—their spears, their slings, their blazing banners, gleaming with gold and silver, are all recounted. John and Jesus had, doubtless, both, often heard from the men of the generation before them, how these awful enemies had wasted the land once and again, swarming on their lean and untiring steppe horses through every valley, murdering, violating, burning, and plundering, for their squadrons of "Immortals" and "Freemen," especially, remained the terror of after years, as the symbol of treachery, greed, and ruthless brutality.

It was in such a state of things that John at last came forth from his retreat, as a prophet to his nation. The nearness of the wilderness of Judea to Jerusalem, and the dense population on every side of it, had no doubt led many to visit him from time to time, for the report of a hermit of special sanctity, living in any particular district, invariably attracted many to see him, and receive his counsels. He made his first public appearance on the Lower Jordan.

Two hours east of the wretched village which is the Jericho of the present day, but three hours from the site of the city of John's day, and eight or nine hours from Jerusalem, the Jordan flows with a quick current towards the Dead Sea, which is in sight, close at hand. Rising in the spurs of Lebanon, and gathering tributary springs and brooks at Cæsarea Philippi, from which Christ set out on His last journey to Jerusalem; flowing, presently, through the pear-shaped, marshy, Sea of Merom, and then through the lovely Lake of Galilee,—the course of the stream, from its leaving the lake to its passing Jericho, is only sixty English miles in a direct line, but two hundred if one follow its countless twistings and turnings. Near Jericho it has a breadth of from ninety to a hundred feet, and a varying depth of from three to seven, and hence can be forded easily, except during the time of floods, in spring, autumn, and winter, when to attempt to cross is very dangerous. It was at this part of the Jordan that Vespasian's soldiers drove such multitudes of the Jews, in the last war, into the stream, when swollen by spring floods, that "the river could not be passed over on account of the dead bodies that were in it," (which might defile one), "and the Lake Asphaltitis" (the Dead Sea) "was also full of corpses, carried down into it by the river." The waters flowing on towards the Dead Sea, between double banks, marking their lower and higher levels, in November and April—here muddy, and elsewhere steep,—covered with dense vegetation, or with waving forests of reeds: the rounded hills of Judea on the west, giving way to the lofty peaks of Ammon on the east, made a scene well suited for his ministrations. Dense thickets of red tamarisks, stately sycamores, with their white stems and broad leaves, oaks with their dark, massy shadow, bending acacias, pale green willows and many-coloured oleanders, still cover the upper terrace,—varied by long, swampy tracts of reeds, taller than a tall

man, on the lower levels,—while over the former, in John's day, rose graceful clumps of palms, "the pride of Jordan," in which lions found covert in the time of the prophets. The valley is only a quarter of an hour broad, and is barren wherever it rises above the reach of the spring floods. Above it, a plain of three or four hours' breadth, and from fifty to sixty feet higher than the ground beneath, stretches, on the west side, to the foot of the rugged, bare, Jewish hills, which rise from a thousand to twelve hundred feet high, and, on the east, to the similar hills of Perea, two thousand to five thousand feet high. This plain, the barren background to a fringe of verdure, is the once famous "circle of the Jordan," where Sodom and other towns flourished, till volcanic forces, as instruments of the wrath of God, destroyed them. It is now known by the name El Ghor, and is a vast, sandy, barren expanse, hot as a furnace, and very unhealthy in summer, from the depth of the Jordan gorge beneath the sea-level. Hence, in John's day, it formed a strong contrast to the green paradise, on the western bank,—"the divine land," immediately around Jericho, the city of palms and roses, as it still does to the rich fringe of vegetation skirting the waters on the eastern side of the river, but vanishing like a dream at only a few paces from them.

It was in this region, beside the flowing stream, with the wild, stony hills shutting in the view on both sides; in a landscape where the narrow limits of the yearly floods drew a sharp line between tropical luxuriance and the scorched and desert barrenness beyond, that John, of whom Jesus could say, in allusion to the waving cane beds on the river's edge, that he was no reed shaken in the wind, but in very truth, Elias who was to come, a prophet, and much more than a prophet—lifted up his voice as the messenger before the face of God's Anointed, to prepare His way. The appearance of John was itself sufficient to arrest attention. His spare form, attenuated by meagre food and austerity: his bright Jewish eyes, full of the living energy that burned within: his long hair, uncut for thirty years—the mark of Nazarite consecration: his rough haircloth garment, and his coarse leather girdle, made him the picture of one of the ancient prophets. The Scriptures described the greatest of the prophets—Elijah the Tishbite, whom all expected to reappear before the Messiah—in exactly such a guise as John presented—"a long-haired man, wearing a leather girdle;" and they knew from the lessons in the Synagogue, if they had not read it for themselves, that the rough haircloth mantle had been the common dress of the old prophets as a class. It was also that of grief and contrition, even then, and added to the associations of the sacred past an appeal to their own sense of guilt and need of contrition.

The idea of the wilderness was sacred to the Jews. "From it," say the Rabbis, "came the Law, the Tabernacle, the Sanhedrim, the priesthood, and the office of the Levites. Even the kingship, and, in-

deed, every good gift which God granted Israel, came from the desert. The invitation of the people to it was in itself significant, for it was called the words of Isaiah—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." In connection with the expectation of the Messiah, its influence was immense. It was by relying on its weight with the people, that Theudas, a wild visionary, who assumed the role of a prophet some years after the Crucifixion, persuaded the multitudes to follow him, as a second Moses, over the Jordan, to the wilderness, where he promised to perform miracles, and assured them that God would appear to deliver his people. Josephus speaks also of others who persuaded the people to follow them into the desert, "where, through the help of God, they would work open signs and wonders," and Jesus Himself thought it necessary, before leaving His disciples, to warn them that "when it was said the Christ was in the wilderness, they were not to go out thither." The nation was daily expecting the appearance of "the wise and perfect prophet," who should bring back the lost Urim and Thummim, "restore the tribes of Israel, turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, reprove the times, and appease the wrath of God, before it broke out in fury." Since Ezra's days the feeling had grown even deeper, that repentance alone could save Israel. "If we repented but one day," said the Rabbis, "the Messiah would appear." He was to lead all men back to God by repentance. "As long as Israel does not repent, it cannot expect the Saviour," said Rabbi Juda. But this repentance would not happen till Elijah had come, in fulfilment of the prediction of Malachi, and he was not to do so till three days before the appearance of the Messiah, when his voice would proclaim from one end of the earth to the other—"Salvation cometh into the world."

A prophet, in the Jewish point of view, was less a seer than a fearless preacher, from whom, to use the words of Clement, of Alexandria, the truth shown forth, as the light streams from the sun. He might reveal the future, but his great characteristic was, that he was the mouthpiece of God, to utter, by resistless impulse, the rebukes or commands of the Almighty, as His ambassador, and the interpreter of His will to men. John realized this ideal. He startled the people by demanding repentance, if they would escape the close approaching wrath of God. The Kingdom of Heaven—a phrase familiar to them from the language of Daniel, of the Psalms of Solomon, and of other books, then in wide circulation—was at hand, and would bring with it the terrors of Heaven. The conscience of the masses was roused. It had sunk to sleep under Pharisaic formalism, Roman oppression, and Sadducean indifference. John's voice sounded like a trumpet to alarm them. The popular excitement spread. Though he kept aloof from Jerusalem and the thickly peopled districts, the note he had struck vibrated through the whole land. Crowds gathered in daily greater numbers from Jerusalem, Judea, and the wide uplands of

Perea. It seemed, indeed, as if he were the promised Elias, the herald of the Messiah. Intensely real, he spoke nothing of levitical rites, or sacrifices, or of the Rabbis, but demanded that the Law should be applied to the conscience, and carried out in the life. A spiritual preparation would alone avert the coming wrath. A second Elijah, in spirit, as well as outward appearance, and, like him, witnessing in evil times, he came to throw down, not to build; to startle, not to instruct; to use the axe not the trowel. The approach of the judgments of which the last of the prophets had spoken; when the indignation of God would burn as an oven, and the proud and the wicked should be as stubble, and be burned up till there was left neither root nor branch,—was his great theme. He added, however, the comforting assurance of the prophet, that to those who feared the name of the Lord of Hosts, the Sun of Righteousness should rise, with healing in His wing-like beams. The whole strain of Malachi was, indeed, only an anticipation of John's preaching. "The Lord, whom ye seek, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in, shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appeareth? For He is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; and He will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and the adulterers, and the false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts." Like all the prophets, his message was one of wrath, and yet, like theirs, it had a conditional promise of divine love and pity. As befitted his office, he seemed ordained, like Elijah, to reprove his times, for like him, "he was unmoved before the face of man, neither could any bring him into subjection."

With the call to repent, John united a significant rite for all who were willing to own their sins, and promise amendment of life. It was the new and striking requirement of baptism, which John had been sent by divine appointment to introduce. The Mosaic ritual had indeed required washings, and purifications, but they were mostly personal acts for cleansing from ceremonial defilements, and were repeated as often as new uncleanness demanded. But baptism was performed only once, and those who sought it had to receive it from the hands of John. The old rites and requirements of the Pharisees would not content him. A new symbol was needed, striking enough to express the vastness of the change he demanded, and to form its fit beginning, and yet simple enough to be easily applied to the whole people, for all, alike, needed to break with the past, and to enter on the life of spiritual effort he proclaimed. Washing had, in all ages, been used as a religious symbol, and significant rite. Naaman's leprosy had been cleansed away in the waters of the Jordan. The priests in the Temple practised constant ablutions, and others were

required daily from the people at large, to remove ceremonial impurity. David had prayed, "Wash me from mine iniquity." Isaiah had cried, "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings." Ezekiel had told his countrymen, to "wash their hearts from wickedness." Ablution in the East, is indeed, of itself, almost a religious duty. The dust and heat weigh upon the spirits and heart like a load; its removal is refreshment and happiness. It was, hence, impossible to see a convert go down into a stream, travel-worn, and soiled with dust, and, after disappearing for a moment, emerge pure and fresh, without feeling that the symbol suited and interpreted a strong craving of the human heart. It was no formal rite with John. "He was a good man," says Josephus, "and urged the Jews who were willing to live worthily, and to show uprightness one to another, and piety towards God, to be baptized. For baptism was approved of by him, not as a means of obtaining pardon for some sins only, but for the purity of the whole body, when the soul had been cleansed beforehand by righteousness." On baptism, in itself, he set no mysterious sacramental value. It was only water, a mere emblem of the purification required in the life and heart, and needed an after baptism by the Holy Spirit. No one could receive it till he had proved his sincerity, by an humble public confession of his sins. Baptism then became a moral vow, to show, by a better life, that the change of heart was genuine.

Bathing in Jordan had been a sacred symbol, at least, since the days of Naaman, but immersion by one like John, with strict and humbling confession of sin, sacred vows of amendment, and hope of forgiveness, if they proved lasting, and all this in preparation for the Messiah, was something wholly new in Israel. It marked, in the most striking way, the wonderful moral revolution which had taken place in the hearts of the people. If, as a school of the Rabbis contend, it was even then the custom to baptize proselytes on their forsaking heathenism, and seeking admission to the communion of Israel, the attitude of John towards the nation was even startling, and their submission to the rite a still greater proof of his power over the popular mind. In this case, it was no less than the treatment of Israel as if it had become heathen, and needed to seek entrance again, on no higher footing than a Gentile convert, to the privileges it had lost.

But he did not leave them to their own unaided efforts after purity. Had he merely summoned them to "flee from the wrath to come," he would have driven them to despair. Had he invited them to baptism, and then left them to their own efforts after holiness, he would have mocked them by an impossible task; for man, looking no higher than himself, can never become pure. Avowing this, he gave meaning and promise to his command and invitation, by pointing them to the coming Messiah, the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

It must have been a strange scene, and it remained long in the popular memory. "What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?" asked Jesus, in later months. The sudden apparition of a "saint," whose life, for years, had been spent in "the house of thirst, where demons and dragons howl," was fitted to startle the whole community, already excited to the uttermost. Men of all classes gathered to listen to the new prophet. The movement, at first local, gradually spread through "the whole nation." The nearer districts—Jerusalem, Judea, and Perea—gathered first. Ere long, the excitable Galilæans, as far as Lebanon and the East Jordan country, caught the enthusiasm, and moved towards the Jordan valley. Caravans, with their numerous beasts, must have covered the Galilæan and Jewish roads, all wending to the one centre. Men left their work, or their calling; the keen trader, the Roman tax-collector, and the native and foreign soldier among them. Every rank was represented. All that was noble, and all that was base in Israel: the holy and the worldly; the pure and the corrupt; the earnest and the false; the friends of Rome and its enemies, mingled in the throng. Supercilious Rabbis, long robed Pharisees, cold and courtly Sadducees, dignified high priests, circumspect Levites, grey-haired elders of the people; the rich farmer with full barns, and the poor peasant; soldiers of the Tetrarch Antipas, from Perea; perhaps, also, proselytes from the Roman garrison at Jerusalem, more disposed to accept baptism in the Jordan than circumcision; publicans,—born Jews, but despised and hated, alike, for their calling and their unjust exactions,—found themselves together. Israelitish women, also, were not wanting, and among them, not a few outcasts of the community—servants of vice. All sought part in the salvation of Israel, or, at least, wished to seem interested in it—even the classes thrust back as unclean by the Pharisees and Essenes. Some longed to lay hold of it, others came only to look, criticize, and gossip, or report to the authorities.

Everything was so new, so startling, so impressive—the wilderness, the stream, the solemn hills—a prophet appearing, after more than five hundred years. His right to reject and denounce the whole present, in the name of God, was now, as always with prophets in the past, universally acknowledged. His words, his baptismal symbol, the kingdom he preached, the Messias whom he announced as at hand, the very multitudes assembled, the visible emotion, the evident good effected, the contrition of the most sunken classes—the publicans and harlots—all showed that the whole nation believed in him. From the rite advanced with such prominence, he was known as "the Baptist," but many gave him the name of Teacher, and even that of Prophet. He did not claim to perform miracles, like Elias, but his word had a wonderful power—his very baptism seemed to be "from heaven"—and, even after his imprisonment and death, the people maintained, with passionate tenacity, against the petty carpings of the priesthood, that he was, indeed, a prophet.

Many even questioned whether he were not the Messiah, or, at least, "the prophet like Moses," whom they expected. He swayed the masses by his words, at his will, and might have made any political use of them he chose, had he been so minded.

As the influence of the movement spread in ever-widening circles over the nation, it became impossible for the self-sufficient authorities at Jerusalem to ignore it. The religious instruction of the people was their prerogative. They claimed to sit in the seat of Moses and to have the key of knowledge, and it was against the rule for any one to teach who had not their authority, confirmed by formal ordination. A deputation of priests and Levites of the Pharisee party was, therefore, deputed to go to the Jordan, and interrogate this new leader of the people as to his claims. Was he the Christ? or was he Elias? or was he the expected prophet? Without a momentary hesitation of vanity or ambition, at the possibility, with his vast popular support, of playing a great part, his manly truthfulness repudiated the right to any of these names. With the whole nation under his influence, and regarded by them with the reverend awe which such questions and suggestions hint, his lofty soul retained its grand simplicity. "He was only the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as saith the prophet Esaias.

Nor is it wonderful that his mission, had such amazing success. Men honour a lofty and fearless soul, seeking no selfish object, but braving all opposition for the noblest ends. John had nothing to lose but his life, and cared for nothing but the faithful discharge of his high commission from the Almighty. Hunger and thirst and nakedness had been his familiar friends, and he who had faced the terrors of the deserts so long, could have little to alarm him in any human anger. "What to him," asks Edward Irving, "was a scowling Pharisee, or a mocking Sadducee, or a fawning publican, or a rough soldier, or a riotous mob? These were jocund, cheerful sights, to one who had roamed amongst the wild beasts of the desert, and in the midst of them laid down his head under no canopy, and with no defence but the canopy and defence of the providence of the Most High. Around a man who can despise accommodations and conveniences, and deal with nature in ancient simplicity and independence, and move amongst her social and religious institutions, like a traveller from another world, free to judge, and censure, and approve, as having himself nothing at stake—around such a man there is a moral grandeur and authority to which none but the narrowest and most bigoted minds will refuse a certain awe and reverence. And when such a personage assumes to himself Divine commission, and publishes new truth with Divine authority, and rebukes all wickedness, and scorns all consequences, he takes, by the natural right of the wiser, the bolder, and the better man, a high place above those who feel themselves enslaved and enshackled by customs which they despise."

Such was the mighty movement that filled all minds, and drew the whole people, by turns, to the banks of the Jordan. Beside the living waters, between the solemn hills on both sides, and under the cloudless blue of an Eastern sky, stood the strange figure of the prophet before his no less striking audience. Like all great leaders, he could read the characters of those he addressed. The smooth varnished hypocrisy of the Pharisee or Sadducee could not deceive him. Those who might have come to him in the hope to gain the inviting promises of the new life by an easy lip confession, and a momentary rite, soon found their error. Like Luther, or Latimer, or Knox, he forgot self in his grand fidelity. Cold prudence or timid caution had no place in a soul so intensely in earnest. THE TRUTH, which he comes to proclaim, is higher than man, and alone commands his homage. His sentences strike, swift and glittering, like lightning flashes, amidst the roll of judgment-day thunders. Each sentence is vivid with bold pictures drawn from nature and life. He compares Israel to a barren fruit-tree ready for felling, and points to the axe already laid at its roots. Timely repentance, and the bringing forth good fruit, may avert the stroke, otherwise it must presently fall, and the tree be cast into the fire. The next moment Israel is a great threshing floor, and the winnowing shovel is at hand to cleanse it thoroughly, that the wheat may be gathered into the garner, and the chaff burned up with unquenchable fire. With perfect humility he points all away from himself, to the Mightier One at hand, for whom he was unworthy, in his own esteem, to perform the slave boy's service of unloosing and removing his sandals. HE would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and with fire—the Holy Ghost to kindle in them heavenly grace, if penitent,—fire, to consume them, if the reverse. The terrors of the day of wrath rolled over his hearers, as his foremost thought; sounds of hope broke in, like soft music, only at intervals, to keep the contrite from despair.

The announcement of divine judgments on a rebellious people was by no means new in Israel, and of itself hardly explains the immense effect of John's preaching. Its power lay in its depth and its demands. The kingdom of heaven, which was at hand, was not a mere gift from above, which they might passively receive, but a human work, which they must themselves carry out. Merely to wait in idle expectancy, as in the past, would not suffice. Nor would the idly-busy trifling of legal rites and observances. They must no longer trust to their descent from Abraham, nor to the cleansing of the outside of the platter by Pharisaic strictness. The coming of the promised kingdom to each hearer, meant his lifting his own life to a higher plane, by steady resolve and effort. Religion must, henceforth, be practical and earnest: in the heart and life, not in worthless outward forms or privileges. For the first time, the great truth was pressed home to the conscience of men that the true kingdom of heaven is in the renewed soul. It marked an era in the moral history

of the world, and Christ Himself has recognized its momentous greatness. "Among them that are born of women," said He, "there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist. For all the prophets and the Law *prophesied*, until John. Till then it was future and distant; the object of passive expectation only. But, from his days, the kingdom of heaven is gained by earnest violence, and men who struggle earnestly take it for themselves." John proclaimed the great truth to a generation that had overlooked it, that "the kingdom" was no mere external blessedness, but the reign of God in the soul of man, and that we must strive, if we would enter into it, or, to use the figure employed by Jesus,—like a city to be taken by storm, it was to be won only by the utmost earnestness. Repentance, with John, was no mere formal confession, but a change of mind; it included not only regret for the past, but a new life for the future; and this he urged so prominently, that even Josephus, a generation afterwards, makes it a characteristic of his preaching. To the frank confession of sins there was added an annihilation of all self-righteousness, whether resting on Abrahamic descent, or attainments in Pharisaic holiness, and a pledge was demanded of a higher spiritual life towards God and man, involving life-long effort.

His whole conception of preparation for the Messianic kingdom was new in his age. The Samaritan prophet, who soon after summoned the multitudes to Gerizim, relied on the wholly external act of securing the vessels of the old Tabernacle, as an inauguration of the day of the Messiah. The Galilæans were disposed to demand the kingdom from the Romans, sword in hand, in the belief that Jehovah would not desert His people, in arms for His cause. John, on the contrary, sought to prepare for it by a moral regeneration of the community. The kingdom of God, with him, was, like that of Isaiah, a kingdom of righteousness and holiness. He had sat at the feet of the prophets, not of the Rabbis. He had sought the knowledge of the preparation needed, not, like the Rabbis, from the Book of Leviticus; not, like the Zealots, from the warlike records of the Maccabees; nor, like the Essenes, from mystic revelations, but from Isaiah. His whole preaching was only a variation of that of the great prophet, in the opening of his book—"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well: seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." He says nothing of an earthly kingdom, or political glory. The sins that had separated between them and God must be removed, and their place filled with "fruits meet for repentance," if the divine kingdom was to be established among them. Pharisees and Essenes had sought to propitiate God by their legal rites. Neither knew of confession of sins, or repentance. The Pharisee only boasted of his virtues, and the Essenes praised righteousness, without a word about penitence. John trusted, not to external forms, but to broken-hearted contrition. Man must work

together with God to bring about the fulfilment of the prophecies of the Messiah's reign.

Nor did he content himself with vague or general appeals or reproofs. "Ye brood of vipers," cried he to a crowd of Pharisees and Sadducees, who had come to his baptism, to scoff and criticize, rather than to confess and repent, and who opposed him with the conservatism of lawyers, and the bigotry of priests,—"who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" In the words of St. Luke, "they rejected the counsel of God towards themselves, not having been baptized by John," and, so far from accepting his mission, denounced him as having a devil. He brushed them aside, with their endless quiddities, and quillets, and casuistical cases, and legal cobwebbery, and they hated him in return. They had come from Jerusalem in full-blown official dignity, as a deputation from the ecclesiastical courts, to ask his credentials, and test his soundness. But whether priests, or Levites, or Rabbis, they shrivelled before the indignant glance and fiery words which exposed their insincerity and incompetence. John held his authority, not from them, but from a higher court! Instead of flattering them, he told them, as he had told the crowds they despised, that they must bring forth fruits worthy of repentance. In their narrow pedantic pride they felt sure of a part in the kingdom of the Messiah, simply as descendants of Abraham; his righteousness being reckoned as theirs. Israel, alone, could please or find favour with God, and it did so on the footing of its descent. The "kingdom of Heaven" was to be strictly Jewish, all other nations being excluded, and "it was Jewish by hereditary right." But John shattered this wretched immorality. "Begin not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones of the desert, lying countless around, to raise up *true* children to Abraham, and will exclude you, his pretended children, from the kingdom, unless you repent!" The stern, fearless words of the old prophets, which made them be hated by the multitude, with the exception of Daniel, the prophet of pleasant things, fell once more from the lips of John, with the same result, at least on the part of the Rabbis. They received homage from all others, but this man treated them with withering scorn. They had fancied he would be like a reed moved in the wind, before them, but they had found him an oak. Flattery and fear were as strange to his soul, as his own rough mantle would have been among the soft clothing of kings' palaces.

The contrast between John's teaching and that of the Rabbis, could have had no more striking illustration than his recorded answers to various inquirers, whom his stern language to their religious leaders had, apparently, alarmed. If the Rabbis were in danger of the fire, what must be required of common men? But no harshness marked his words to honest anxiety. He demanded simply that they show their sincerity by their unselfishness. They were to act on their pro-

fessions of desire to lead a new life. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." If they ministered to the naked and hungry, as a loving duty, they proved their discipleship genuine. John's wide human sympathies embraced all classes. Like Jesus, he cast out none who came to him. The abhorred publicans, from whom the Pharisees shrank as accursed, were cheered by the assurance that they, too, might share in the kingdom, if their repentance were sincere. "Exact no more," said the prophet, "than that which is appointed you." Even the soldiers were welcome, and had a fitting counsel—"Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." That the publican should do his duty honestly, as in the sight of God, and that the soldier should deny himself the license of his calling, and be faithful to his standard, from a sense of obligation before God, were practical tests of loyalty to conscience, which would carry with them the Divine favour. In all cases, moral regeneration was the grand aim, and the man himself must work to carry out the reformation.

But, while John thus demanded practical results, by human effort, he was far from teaching that the most earnest wish to change the life, would, of itself, suffice. He brought the hope of forgiveness in the day of the wrath of God, to bear on all classes, and made them feel that salvation could not come, after all, from their own acts, though these must be rendered, but only by pardon from God. He proclaimed, besides, the need of the Spirit of God to perfect the inner revolution. "He that cometh after me will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." For the hardened there would, indeed, be a baptism of fire, but, for the contrite, the heavenly gift of a higher will, and a greater power, a deeper knowledge of God, and a closer communion with Him. Feeling the want of the times, and filled with the spirit of the prophets, he could not forget how they had announced, as a sign of the coming of the Messiah, that Jehovah "would pour out His spirit upon all flesh," "that He would pour water upon him that was thirsty, and floods on the dry ground," and "His spirit upon the offspring of Jacob." He could not doubt, therefore, that He, before whom he was only a herald's voice, the Mighty One, whose sandals it was too great an honour for him to unloose, would come, not only to avenge, but to bless. But, to do this, He must bring with Him a higher, quickening spiritual power—the power of the Holy Ghost. In the bestowal of this heavenly influence, to carry out the new creation, begun by the forgiveness of sins, was summed up John's message to his age.

It was a mark of the surprising greatness of John's whole spiritual nature, that he had realized the need of action on the part of man, to secure the fulfilment of the divine promise of the kingdom; but it was no less so, that he realized the limitations of human effort, and proclaimed the necessity of a Divine, new-creating power, to secure

the holy transformation of the will and heart. To be real and earnest in such an age, to unveil its true spiritual wants, to wake it to new religious life, were transcendent merits, but it is even grander to see the mighty man—full of humility, with deep self-knowledge, and knowledge of his fellow-men,—pointing to God in heaven, who, stronger than human will or effort, alone could break the chains of sin from the soul, and lead it to the light.

Wholly self-oblivious, tainted by no stain of human pride, self-consciousness, or low ambition, John had felt it no usurpation, or sacrilegious assumption, to constitute himself "the messenger," predicted by Malachi, "sent to prepare the way before the Lord." Nor was his preaching more than an expansion of the prophet's words—that "the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in." He had received the commission from no human lips, but had been set apart to it, from above, before his birth. Filled with the grandeur of his mission, nothing arrested him, or turned him aside. The crowds saw in him the most unbending strength, united with the most complete self-sacrifice: a type of grand fidelity to God and His truth, and of the lowliest self-denial. The sorrows and hopes of Israel seemed to shine out from his eyes,—bright with the inspiration of his soul, but sad with the greatness of his work,—as he summoned the crowds to repentance, alarmed them by words of terror, or led them, in groups, to the Jordan, and immersed each singly in the waters, after earnest and full confession of their sins. The newly baptized knelt in prayer along the banks, many, doubtless, with tears, loud sighs, and exclamations, as is still the manner with the emotional races of the East, even when far less excited than John's hearers must have been. All wished to begin a new life, and craved counsel from one in whom they now implicitly believed, and each, in turn—publican, soldier, citizen, and open sinner—heard a few words which pointed out to them their future safety. The narrow separatism and worthless externalism of the Law were to be forsaken, and love to God and their neighbour, and a future baptism of the Holy Ghost, by Him who was to come, were to take their place.

But John, with all his grandeur, was still a Jew. What his conceptions of the kingdom of the Messiah were, beyond his realization of its purity, we have few grounds of judging. From an after incident in his life, it would seem that he thought of it as the restoration of the theocracy, amidst a people prepared for it by repentance and moral reformation. It would be to set him above his times, and even above the apostles, as they remained during the whole lifetime of their Master, to conceive him as realizing the purely spiritual kingdom Jesus was to establish. He was greater than all the prophets, in his magnificent faith that the work he had begun would be carried out by Jehovah Himself, through His Messiah, and in his realization of the need of human action, in repentance and a new life, to the

establishment of the Messiah's kingdom. Others had left God to do all at some future time, limiting themselves to prophecy. John alone taught that the kingdom of God had already come in the contrite soul which proved its penitence by holy fruits. But he was also less than the least in that kingdom, in his inadequate realization of it in its full greatness. He "came neither eating nor drinking,"—a type of Jewish asceticism, and his teaching bore, throughout, the true Jewish stamp. Perhaps he rose above the thought, universal in his day, that the outer act had, in itself, an intrinsic worth, if not, even, a spiritual power, but the importance he attached to outward expressions of penitence was entirely Jewish. Like the Rabbis, he laid stress on fasting, and on the "making prayers," in the Jewish sense, and his disciples, in these and other external exercises of religion, found themselves nearer the disciples of the Pharisees than those of Jesus. As a Nazarite and an ascetic, the dread of defilement must have kept him apart from the great mass of his audience, for he dared not touch any but "the clean," even in baptizing them.

In this aspect of it, the work of John was, in the eyes of Christ, only the sewing a new patch on an old garment, or new wine put into old bottles. The great movement he set on foot, while an immense advance on the past in Judaism, was yet, in its essence, Jewish. The ascetic spirit of its origin perpetuated itself in John's disciples, and marked his whole conceptions as imperfect and passing —the morning red heralding the day, but as yet mingled with the night.

John formed no separate communion. He taught his disciples to pray, and it would seem as if he had ultimately gathered a special band round him, as the apostles were gathered round Jesus. But he came, not to found a new sect. His far grander aim was to raise the nation from spiritual death, and direct it to the coming Messiah.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS AND THE DEATH OF JOHN.

The great wave of religious excitement produced by the preaching of John had set the whole land in motion. Foulque de Nouilly, the famous monkish preacher of the thirteenth century, whose discourses moved all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest, so that people rushed in crowds from distant countries to hear him, or Whitfield, in the last century, who stirred the whole nation in his day, help us to realize the sensation produced by John's ministrations. To a people sunk for the time in religious apathy, and corrupted in morals, but loyal to the voice of their Scriptures, and the lofty spiritual ideals of the past, his voice came like a trumpet, rousing them to new life. His bronzed, wasted features, his prophet's dress and bear-

ing, his fearless boldness for God, and the response of their own hearts to his denunciations and demands, made him a mighty power. He gave utterance to their deepest desires and aspirations, fanned their national hopes, and roused their enthusiasm. As a people, they were not in favour of asceticism. The Rabbis had a saying, that the ignorant did not know how to keep themselves from transgressions of the Law, nor the common people how to become "the Pious," or rigorous Jews. Even one so famous as Simeon the Just discountenanced Nazarite vows, with the rigid abstinence and self-denial they imposed. The worldly Sadducee laughed at the austerities of the Rabbis, "who tormented themselves in this life without gaining anything by it in the other," and the mass of the people were no doubt of their mind. But the vision of a true Nazarite, in whom all could see a grand superiority to the worthless ambitions of life, was like a revelation of eternal realities, which no one could turn lightly aside. The very power of his words seemed to imply the truth of his warnings, for the Rabbis had already told them that "universal repentance," such as they seemed to see round them, "would only happen when Elias had come," and his coming was the sure sign of the approach of the kingdom of God.

Everthing was fitted to startle. The proclamation of the Messiah as at hand—the call to repentance—the announcement of the swift rolling towards them of the thunders of the wrath of God—the declared worthlessness of distinctions of race, blood, or position—the demand for fruits meet for repentance, or, in other words, that a man must work out his own salvation in co-operation with God—the symbolical rite, to which he required submission, and the humbling confession of sin before the world, which he added—all combined to carry his name and work to the utmost limits of the land.

Meanwhile, the authorities at Jerusalem, with the jealousy of all ecclesiastical bodies towards those outside their own pale, grew uneasy at his success, and plotted to get him into their toils, as they did afterwards in the case of our Lord. The ensnaring questions put to him by the deputation of priestly Pharisees sent from Jerusalem, seemed to have made John think it necessary to seek safety by removing beyond the bounds of Judea. From the "circle of Jordan," including both sides of the stream, he passed upwards, apparently, to the small sunken plain which borders it, just beneath Scythopolis, where Gideon's Brook of Trembling makes its steep way from the eastern end of Esdraelon, down the Wady Jalûd, to the Jordan. He chose a spot near this, on the eastern side, known in those days as Bethabara, where a ford crossed the river, and gave facilities for baptism. He had been preaching and baptizing for some time in the south, and his removal to a more northern position opened a new field, from its nearness to Galilee. The excitement still continued as great as ever. The towns on the lake of Galilee, and even the villages north of Esdraelon, poured forth to the new prophet.

Weeks passed, and it must now have been the late summer, for, before long, John had to leave the Jordan, as too shallow, at its accessible parts for baptism, and go to another place—Enon, near Salem—an unknown locality, where pools more suitable were yet to be had. But, as yet, there was no sign of the advent of the expected Messiah. The assembling of the nation, and the great work on the banks of the Jordan, were necessary preliminaries, in the Divine Counsels, to dignify the ultimate Advent of the Redeemer.

Jesus had been waiting the fit moment for leaving His thirty years' obscurity in Nazareth, and presenting Himself before the herald who had been unconsciously proclaiming Him. Though cousins, the Baptist and the Son of Mary had never seen each other, for they lived at opposite ends of the country, and John had spent we do not know how many years of his life in hermit seclusion, far from man. But if John did not know His person, he had yet, doubtless, heard the wondrous circumstances attending His birth, and must have been daily expecting Him to put forth His claims. At last, Jesus left Nazareth and came to Jordan, and presented Himself before him. His appearance, wholly different from that of all who had thronged to his ministry, at once arrested the prophet's eye. The holy devotion and heavenly repose which marked Him as He stood in prayer, spoke of a purity and greatness before which the soul of John did instant reverence. He might have stern words for the proud and self-righteous, but, in the presence of such a vision as that before him, he has only those of lowliest homage. The light, as of other worlds, shining from the depths of those calm eyes; the radiance of a soul free from all stain of sin, transfiguring the pale face,—full, at once, of highest beauty, tenderest love, and deepest sadness, was hereafter, even when dimly seen by the light of midnight torches and lanterns, to make accusers shrink backwards and fall, overcome, to the ground, and Simon Peter pray—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" The soul has an instinctive recognition of goodness, and feels its awfulness. Spiritual greatness wears a kingly crown which compels instant reverence. Had He been an earthly king, John would have remained the stern, fearless prophet; had He been the highest of the earthly priesthood, he would have borne himself as His superior, in the consciousness of his high mission. But the royalty before him was not of this world, and the priesthood was higher than that of Aaron. Jesus had come to be baptized, but John, for the first and last time, with any one of all the crowds that had gathered round him, hesitated, and drew back. "I have need to be baptized of Thee," said he, "and comest Thou to me?" He might not know by name, or open intimation, whom he had before him, but unerring instinct taught him that he addressed a greater than himself. He was longing for the revelation of the Messiah, and knew that God could manifest Him at any moment, clothing Him whom He had designated for the high dignity,

with divine might, to carry out His work. It is, indeed, the especial greatness of the Baptist that he not only rose to the level of so great an enterprise as the spiritual regeneration of his country, and devoted himself to it with gigantic energy, and that he was a man of spotless truth and dauntless courage, but that, with all this, he was filled with a splendid enthusiasm, and unfaltering faith in the nearness of the Messiah. This alone could have supported him, under the burden of his work. No one, till then, had stood, like him, between the dead past and the dimly rising future, in hopeful and confident expectation. He had led the people from the corruption, wickedness, and confusion of their decayed religiousness, and stood calmly and grandly at their head, in the firm belief that the Messiah, who, only, could realize the promises he had made them, of divine help towards a higher life, would emerge from the darkness before him. In such an attitude of intensest expectancy, he must at once have recognized the marks of the possible Messiah in any one who showed them. He might look for no outward signs: the divine lineaments of a nature fit for such an office would suffice, the future being left to God, to whom he entrusted his own work. He could not go abroad to search for one who might be what he desired, but his ardent, yet keen, soul, could not fail to discover Him if He came within his sphere. No wonder, then, he felt, that, in Jesus, the object of his longings seemed to have been found. "I knew Him not," said he, some time later, "and had not in any measure begun my work because I knew Him, or that He might at my request come to me, but I have been baptizing and rousing Israel, that He, though unknown to me,—drawn indeed by my work, but without design or thought on my part, and, therefore, only by the clear leading and purpose of God,—should be revealed to Israel as the true Messiah." He had, already, before Jesus had presented Himself, made known his firm conviction that God had heard the cry of His people, and had provided the Messiah, though as yet He had not disclosed Him. In his grand trust in God, he had told the multitudes, "there standeth one among you, whom you know not—the true Messiah," who has been among you, and you have not dreamed of it, because you knew neither the marks nor nature of God's Anointed, and, indeed, you will not recognize Him, even when He appears. That ye may know Him, He is He who cometh after me, and yet shall be preferred before me—the true Messiah, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose. "He shall be preferred before me, *for He was before me.* He is no man of mortal birth, for scripture and Rabbi unite in recognizing the Messiah as the uncreated Word of God, sent down from heaven, to dwell for a time among men." John's long communion with God in the wilderness, his prayers and tears, had raised him to a spiritual grandeur which anticipated, with a higher than human sense, the yet unrevealed. Lifted above earth, the advent of the Messiah had become to him a living truth, which only waited God's

time for its disclosure, and at last stood visibly before him, in Him who sought baptism at his hands.

No wonder he shrank from assuming to such a being the relation in which he stood to other men. He knew that only one who was wholly free from sin could be the Messiah, and such an One he felt was before him. The meekness, gentleness, and purity, which overawed him, spoke of nothing less, and the heart of John, on the instant, could express its overpowering emotion in no more fitting thought than that he "beheld the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the World." In such words he embodied a conception which he had heard from the Rabbis since his childhood, for the daily sacrifice, on whose head the sins of Israel were laid by a formal act, was their favourite type of the Messiah, who was hence known by the endearing name of the "Lamb of God." The sublime picture in Isaiah of Him on whom Jehovah had laid the iniquities of His people, and who was led as a Lamb to the slaughter, had already been applied to the Messiah, and John might well think of Him in this His highest aspect,—oppressed in soul, as he himself was, by the weight of the sins of his race.

The hesitation of the Baptist, however, was not allowed to prevail, for Jesus still repeated His desire to be baptized. "Suffer it now," said He, "for thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness. From whatever God has required of Israel as a duty, I cannot withhold myself." Baptism was an ordinance of God, required by His prophet as the introduction of the new dispensation. It was a part of "righteousness," that is, it was a part of God's commandments, which Jesus came into the world to show us the example of fulfilling, both in the letter and the spirit. Moreover, He had not yet received the consecration of the Spirit, abiding on Him, and had not yet assumed the awful dignity of the Messiah, but had hitherto been only the unknown villager of Nazareth. No subject is more mysterious than the "increase in wisdom" which marked the Saviour, as it does all other men, nor can we conjecture when it was that the full realization of His divine mission first rose before Him. As yet there had been no indication of its having done so, for He had not yet "manifested His glory," or appeared at all before men. Is it too much to believe that His baptism was the formal consecration, which marked His entrance on His great office?

John resisted no longer, and leading Jesus into the stream, the rite was performed. Can we question that such an act was a crisis in the life of our Lord? His perfect manhood, like that of other men, in all things, except sin, forbids our doubting it. Holy and pure before sinking under the waters, He must yet have risen from them with the light of a higher glory in His countenance. His past life was closed; a new era had opened. Hitherto the humble villager, veiled from the world, He was henceforth the Messiah, openly working amongst men. It was the true moment of His entrance on a new

life. Past years had been buried in the waters of Jordan. He entered them as Jesus, the Son of Man; He rose from them, The Christ of God.

Nor is it wonderful that, at a moment when He was passing through such a supreme spiritual crisis, there should have been sympathy with it in the distant regions of the Universe. "Being baptized," says St. Luke, "and praying,"—in the overpowering emotion of such a time—the heaven was opened—all hindrances of human weakness withdrawing, so that the eye seemed to pierce the sky, to the far-off heavenly splendours. And now a vision as of the Holy Ghost descending in the "bodily form" of a dove, the symbol of purity and peace, and resting over the newly baptized as in permanent consecration, revealed itself to John and Jesus; a heavenly voice uttering as it did so, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Isaiah had, long before, foretold how the Spirit of Jehovah should rest upon the Branch from the roots of Jesse—the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of fear of the Lord, and the prediction was now fulfilled. It was the divine anointing of Jesus, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of God—the consecration from on high to the office of Messiah, and, as such, the true birth-hour of Christianity. It was His solemn designation as the Great High Priest of the new and abiding Dispensation. The sons of Aaron were required by the Levitical Law to be set apart to their high office by washing and anointing, and He who was to be clothed with an infinitely loftier priesthood, could not be allowed to want a correspondingly grander inauguration. Instead of the Temple made with hands, He had around Him the great Temple of nature; for the brazen laver He had the flowing river, reflecting the vault of heaven. If He had no golden robes, He had the robe of a sinless righteousness, and if there were no sacred oil, He had, instead, the anointing of the Holy Ghost. John had already, by Divine intimation, learned that the Spirit should thus descend on Him who was to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and thus saw the confirmation of his belief that Jesus was, indeed, the Lamb of God, and His Son. How long He remained with John is not told us, but it would seem as if He had forthwith retired to the wilderness, to return only after His temptation.

The great work of John was now over. As Samuel had once consecrated the earthly David king over the outward theocracy, the last of the prophets had consecrated a greater king, who should rule, by different means, over a kingdom wholly different, though John, standing as he did, outside, could at best only dimly conjecture these characteristics of the new Messianic reign. He lived and worked long enough after this crowning moment, to rejoice over the first ad-

vances of the new theocracy he had called into being, but also long enough to show that he did not comprehend its spirit, as he would have done, had he lived later. His days were numbered Those in power feared his words and work, which gave him supreme influence among the people. The priests and Rabbis had failed in their plots against him, but what they could not themselves do, they were ere-long able to effect through one of greater power for evil.

John seems latterly to have moved from place to place, along both banks of the Jordan, both north and south. How long he continued to labour is not known, but he was still baptizing after Jesus had begun His ministry, at the marriage feast of Cana. The popularity of Jesus had roused the jealousy of the disciples of the Baptist, and had even led to angry feeling. A dispute with a Jew—likely a disciple of Jesus—respecting baptism, brought matters to a crisis. He had, apparently, claimed for that of Jesus a higher power of cleansing from the guilt of sin than that of their master. Irritated and annoyed, John's followers returned and told him how He "who had been with him beyond Jordan, to whom he had borne witness, was baptizing, and that all men were now coming to Him." The news only seemed to bring the grand humility of the Baptist more prominently than ever into view, and showed him to be above any selfish or petty thought; a man to whom the will of God was the abiding law. "He must increase," said he, "but I must decrease, for He is the Christ the Bridegroom. I rejoice greatly to hear His voice. He is from above, and, therefore, above all: I am only of the earth, and speak as such. He has received the testimony of heaven; He has the power of life and death: He is the beloved son, into whose hand the Father has committed all things." With this grand utterance, John disappears into the gloom of a prison. He had been a "lamp," as Jesus calls him, burning brightly in his day, but the Light of the world had now risen, and *his* light must grow dim and expire.

John owed his imprisonment to Herod Antipas, in whose territories he had sought safety, and the opportunity of carrying on his work in peace. The cause assigned before the people for his arrest was that John had ventured to reprove Herod for his unlawful marriage with Herodias, but political fears had, probably, in reality, more to do with it. Herod, with the crafty cunning for which Jesus afterwards spoke of him as "the fox," was afraid that John might turn his wide popularity to political account, and head a religious rising, perhaps like that of Judas the Galilæan, for all men seemed ready for anything he might advise. He held it, therefore, better, says Josephus, to anticipate any attempt at revolution, by imprisoning him, and, if needs were, by putting him to death, rather than lament a disturbance after it had broken out.

Antipas, it seems, passed his time, now, in Tiberias, then, in Machærus, on his southern border, in Perea. In him, the hierarchy and Rabbis at Jerusalem, impotent themselves, found an instrument

to crush the unlicensed teacher who so freely condemned them, and had so great a hold upon the people. Pilate, ever fearful of any popular movement, may have demanded, at their crafty instigation, that action should be taken, and these influences, added to the apprehensions of Antipas himself, brought matters to a crisis. Sending a band of soldiers and police northwards to the Jordan, a distance of from six to eight hours, they apprehended the Baptist, likely by night, when the people were not astir, and, binding the defenceless man, hurried him off to the fortress Machaerus.

This castle, known as "the diadem," from its crown-like seat on the lofty rocks, and as "the black tower," lay on the east side of the Dead Sea, almost on a line with Bethlehem. It was the southern stronghold of Perea, as the Macedonian colony of Pella was the northern. Nature, herself, had here raised a stronghold, as she had that of Masada, on the other side of the Dead Sea, a little further south. It lay above the deep gorge that divides the mountains of Abarim from the range of Pisgah, in the wild region where, from immemorial tradition, the Jews sought the grave of Moses. A few miles to the north, in a deep, rugged valley, lay Callirrhöe, famous for its warm baths, where the dying Herod had sought relief, and had nearly met his death. Its hot springs burst at one spot, from the rocks in the bottom of the gorge, and, near them, others poured forth water of the iciest coldness, while the hills round were in those days pierced with mines of sulphur and alum. The torrent of Zerka Ma'in, descending between walls of basalt, and red, brown, and black, volcanic tuff, rushes through the ravine, over a channel of huge rocks, from the uplands of Perea to the east shore of the Dead Sea. At a short distance south, the Wady Z'gara runs east and west, in a profound gorge, with precipitous sides, at some parts eight hundred feet high, cleaving its wild way, by leaps, down three thousand eight hundred feet, to the Dead Sea. A parallel valley succeeds, along the hollow of which ran the old Roman road, joining Machaerus with Callirrhöe, and with the great road from Petra to Damascus. Rising from this ravine, the long mountain ridge of Attaroth stretches, in heaped-up confusion, ten miles to the south-west, and on the highest point of this, where it sinks sheer down towards the Zerka Ma'in, the ruins of Machaerus, in great masses of squared stone, still overhang the profound depth below. At the foot of the isolated cliff on which the fortress was built, and separated from it by a deep and narrow valley, not quite a mile across, lie the ruins of the town of Machaerus, covering more than a square mile, showing in the remains of a Temple of the Sun, that, along with the fanatical Jewish population, it must have had many heathen, that is, Greek or Roman citizens, who were allowed to practise their idolatry in peace.

The first fortress had been built here by Alexander Jannæus, but it was afterwards destroyed by Gabinius, in his war against Aristobulus. When Herod came to be king, however, his keen eye saw the strength

of the position, and he determined to rebuild the castle as a frontier defence against the Arabs. Surrounding a large space with walls and towers, he built a city from which a path led up to the citadel, on the top of the ridge. The citadel itself was at one end of a narrow ridge, nearly a mile in length from east to west, and formed a last retreat in case of attack, but it was not enough for his magnificent ideas. At the other end of the ridge, he built a great wall, enclosing the summit of the hill, with towers two hundred feet high at the corners, and in the space thus gained built a grand palace, with rows of columns of a single stone a-piece, halls lined with many-coloured marbles, magnificent baths, and all the details of Roman luxury, not omitting huge cisterns, barracks, and storehouses, with everything needed for defence in case of siege. The detached citadel was the scene of John's imprisonment; a stern and gloomy keep, with underground dungeons, still visible, hewn down into the living rock. The fortress-palace, at the other end of the fortifications, at the time the residence of Antipas and his retainers, was merry with their revelry, but the dungeon of John lay in midnight darkness. From his windows Antipas had a magnificent view of the Dead Sea, the whole course of the Jordan, Jerusalem, Hebron, the frowning fortress of Masada, the circle of Jordan, and the cliffs of Engedi, on the west, and of the mountains of Gilead, rising beyond the wild heights of Pisgah, on the north; but his captive, the child of the boundless wilderness, pined in perpetual night.

Beneath this stronghold, perched on the top of the highest summit of the wild region, the valleys sank in unscalable precipices, on three sides, to such a depth that Josephus is well-nigh excused for thinking that the eye could not reach their bottom. The fourth side was only a little less terrible. Wild desolation reigned far and near, but the hidden hollows of some of the gorges were luxuriant with palms, olives, and vines, and superstition believed that, among other wonders, there grew in them a plant, fiery red in colour, and shedding rays of flame in the evening, which had power to expel demons and heal diseases, though only to be pulled at the cost of life. Seetzen, a German traveller, who re-discovered the site in 1807, has left a vivid picture of the landscape round. Masses of lava, brown, red, and black, are varied with pumice stone, or black basalt, in huge broken masses, or perpendicular cliffs, resting on white limestone; and then, again, dark brown rocks—the iron-mountain of Josephus. The rushing stream beneath is overgrown with oleanders and date-palms, willows, poplars, and tall reeds, while hot sulphur springs gush from the clefts of the rocks, sending up a thick mist of steam.

In this wild, warlike place, lay John, cut off from the world, from Israel, and from the grand work of national regeneration of which he was the soul—in the midst of a population of soldiers, barbarians, Arabs, Idumeans, Amorites, and Moabites, who ran no risk of being infected by his words. Perhaps he was favoured beyond other pris-

oners by being brought from his underground vault, after a time, to some cell of the corner towers, to be near his captor. If so, he could look from his lonely height over the regions of the Dead Sea, and the Jordan, where the years of his desert consecration, and the months of his great work, had been spent. Yet he was no mere shadow of the past, but still a living power. No strong hand had protected him; no miracle had been vouchsafed by God for his deliverance, and there was no hope of a rescue by the people, however they might regret him, or murmur at his fate. His prison, unapproachable on three sides, and reached, on the fourth, only by a bridle path, through numerous fortified gates, made escape impossible. Nor could he hope to have support from any within the castle itself, for its motley population of Arabs, Edomites, and Moabites, cared nothing for the promises of Israel. The sheikhs of the wandering tribes around went out and in, the troops of the garrison were reviewed and drilled, or lounged round the battlements, and the courtiers of the haughty Herodias flashed hither and thither in their bravery, through the town: the hot springs of the valley, and the bracing air of the mountain-top, gave new tone to the nerves of the health-seekers frequenting them from all parts, but the Baptist lay unheeded and helpless. Apart from political reasons, it was so healthy a place that Antipas might well be fond of it. "Provisions," says Josephus, "remained good for a hundred years in the fortress of Masada, on the other side of the Dead Sea, for the air, at the great height of the castle, is purified from every earthy or hurtful exhalation." Yet there was no great bustle, for the place was too out of the way for much intercourse with it. Ten thousand people lived in the town below, but round John were only rough soldiery, drafted from the neighbouring tribes, and the attendants on Herod, of whom Jesus speaks as "the people gorgeously apparelled, who lived delicately," as became those in the courts of kings. Yet the nation, with unbroken faith, kept watch outside the gates of the prison, and the breath of God still moved among them like the soft wind through the leaves of summer.

Antipas had laid hands on John with the intention of putting him to death, and there were those round him who grudged him each day's life, but fear of the people kept "the fox" from his purpose, for a time, as a similar dread, on the part of the hierarchy at Jerusalem, afterwards protected Jesus. Yet, his prison was no mere detention, for prisons in antiquity, and especially in the East, had no refinements of mercy. The words of Christ—"They did to him whatsoever they pleased," are significant, and point to torture, insult, and ill-treatment. The spirit that called for the blind Samson to be brought from his prison, to make sport before the Philistine lords, was still in full vigour.

But John, though defenceless, had a kingly divinity of truth and goodness, that, for a time, hedged him round from death. Brought before Antipas, once and again, to be shown off to the crowd at his

table, he remained so completely himself, that the tyrant, for the moment, became the conquest of the helpless prisoner. Feeling how awful goodness is, he "feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and kept him closely; and when he heard him, he was very anxious, and heard him gladly." Even he, for the instant, looked towards God and heaven! Uneasy conscience, superstition, a natural indisposition to violence, and the slow, cruel delays of Eastern justice, left John alive. He was even allowed to have intercourse with some of his people, whose love braved personal danger, and brought them to his prison to visit him. Perhaps, as with St. Paul, when a prisoner at Cæsarea, thirty years later, it was formally permitted that "he should have liberty, and that none of his acquaintance should be forbidden to minister or come unto him;" or, very likely, the loose ways of the East, so different from strict Roman practice, left access to him possible. His disciples came and went, brought him news from the outer world, and told him of the preaching of the kingdom that had begun in Galilee—perhaps shared his imprisonment, in turn, listened to his instructions, and went forth on messages connected with his great work. Antipas had, however, nothing to fear in all this, and the Baptist had as little to hope. His disciples had held badly together, since their head was taken from them. They clung firmly only to the external, ascetic side of his teaching, as might have been expected, striving to outdo the Pharisees in washings and fasts, and they went about sad, because the Bridegroom was taken from them. Perhaps, some of them still preached the coming of the kingdom, and baptized penitents, but the crowds fell off, in great part, after John's imprisonment, and flocked to the new prophet whom he had himself baptized.

To men trained in Jewish ideas, there was much that seemed strange and doubtful in the teaching that had thus superseded that of John. The works of Jesus were mighty, but His disciples did not fast. The Elijah sternness of the preaching in the wilderness of Judea, was not found in that of the shores of the Lake of Tiberias. There was no word of any open assumption of the office of Messiah, nor any signs of the approaching erection of a purified theocracy. There were no preparations for the triumph of Israel, and no symptoms of the wrath of God breaking forth on their oppressors. As a Jew, John must have shared, more or less, in the universal belief of his nation, that, however pure, the kingdom of the Messiah was to be an earthly dominion over Israel, when it had been delivered from the polluting presence of the heathen, and had been marked, once more, as the people of God, under Him alone. The news brought him seems to have made him almost waver in his belief in Jesus, as the Messiah thus expected, for the human mind, in loneliness, disappointment, and imperfect knowledge, is prone to read things by the dull light of the present, rather than by the evidence of the past. In moments of weakness and despondency, it is easy to think that our

whole life has been a dream, and our fondest hopes mere illusions. The Gospels seem to point at such a momentary depression in the mind of John. As if he had been lost in thought over what he had heard from his visitors, he sent to Jesus for a solution of his doubts. "Now, when John heard in the prison of the works of the Christ, for they had told him concerning all these things,"—the miracle of the centurion's servant, and of the young man just raised from the bier at Nain—"having called unto him two of his disciples, he sent, through them, to the Lord, and said to Him, 'Art Thou the Coming One, or must we look for another?' And the men came to Him, and said, 'John the Baptist has sent us unto Thee, saying, "Art Thou the Coming One, or must we look for another?"' In that hour He healed many of diseases, and plagues, and evil spirits; and unto many blind He granted sight. And He answered, and said unto them, 'Go and tell John what ye saw and heard, that the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them;'" and then He added, as if to bring John back from his doubts, "and blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended at me." The whole answer showed a fulfilment of the words of Isaiah, respecting the Messiah, which must have sunk deep into the heart of one to whom that great prophet was an anticipatory Gospel. John would remember that in one place it was written—"Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing;" and in another—"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Jesus could have given him no proof more touching, that He was, indeed, the Messiah.

This was the summer of John's captivity, but the winter was fast approaching. Antipas, and perhaps, Herodias, and the local court as well, had been curious to see and hear the man who had played so great a part. At first, mere idle curiosity, like that which afterwards made him anxious to see Jesus,—though he ended his interview by "setting Him at nought and mocking Him,"—made him have John brought before him. Perhaps the mingled motives which led Agrippa II., Berenice, and Drusilla, to have Paul brought into their presence, led to his being called into the palace. To hear anything uncourtly from one in their power was not to be imagined. The sight of him would break the monotony of an afternoon, and give something to talk about for the evening. But John was no man for kings' courts. Life was too real for him to deal in smooth-tongued flatteries and deceits. He made an impression on the court, though it was far too proud and trifling to think of anything so vulgar as repentance. Like St. Paul before Felix and Drusilla, but in quite

another mode, he was a preacher of righteousness, temperance, and judgment, though in bonds. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," said the fearless man,—in the grand superiority of religious zeal,—to him who had his life in his hands. Perhaps Antipas had wished to know what he must do to secure an interest in the approaching political kingdom of God, and was thus told to prove his sincerity by breaking off a life of sin. In the reproof, John set himself on the firm footing of the Mosaic Law, which bound Herod, as a Jewish prince; though the cowardly silence of the hierarchy had allowed him to trample it under foot at his will, without censure. "Herodias," says Josephus, "took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and, having divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, married Herod (Antipas), her father's brother, by the father's side." The Law had repeatedly forbidden marriage with a living brother's wife, as a scandal against which childlessness was threatened, and it made no difference between brothers and half-brothers. In the case of Antipas the transgression of the Law was the greater, as John saw and pointed out, for his marriage had only been effected by adultery on the part of both wife and husband. Moreover, it had been brought about by the most heartless outrage on the hospitality of a brother. To make the whole still more revolting, it was not needed that John should touch on the relationship between Antipas and Herodias, for the Law did not take notice of this, and the Herod family had long disregarded such objections.

The disgraceful story dated back to the first or second year of Pilate. In the year 26, or, more probably, 27, the whole family of the Herods had gathered together to a feast in Jerusalem. To this act of piety, as it was held, they had given a still higher value, in popular opinion, by their action in a matter which lay near the heart of a population zealous for the Law. Pilate, to prevent an insurrection, had reluctantly withdrawn the standards, with their supposed idolatrous emblems, set up in the year 26, before the Castle Antonia. But his offended pride had not forgotten the humiliation, and he, now, to efface the remembrance of it, had hung votive tablets on the palace in Zion. They were golden shields, dedicated to Tiberius, like those everywhere hung up in the temples, in honour of the gods, as acknowledgment of some deliverance, or signal blessing in health or fortune, received at their hands. They got their name from having been vowed beforehand, in case a divine favour, earnestly desired, should be vouchsafed. On those he now hung up, Pilate inscribed only his own name and that of Tiberius, but the Jews denounced them as idolatrous, and raised a great clamour to have them removed. The letter of the Law might not condemn them, but they had homage paid them, like altars, and, hence, were an abomination. The four sons of Herod took up the defence of the Law, thus outraged in spirit, and on Pilate referring the matter to the Emperor, to escape a second humiliation, a deputation was sent

off to Rome It happened that Antipas, also, had business at Rome at the time, and as he set out on it presently, the people saw in his journey a further proof of his piety, as they never doubted he had gone in support of their cause. But he had adultery in his heart while affecting zeal for religion.

Among the members of the Herod family present at the family feast was Herod Boëthos, the son of Herod the Great and the second Mariamne, the famous Jerusalem beauty of her day, whose father, an Alexandrian Jew, Herod had raised to the high priesthood, in honour of the alliance with his daughter. This Herod Boëthos had married Herodias, the grand-daughter of his father and the first Mariamne, and daughter of Aristobulus, one of Mariamne's murdered sons. The uncle had thus married the niece, but this was nothing strange in the Herods. When Antipas came to Jerusalem, to the feast, Herod Boëthos made him his guest, as his half-brother. Never was hospitality worse repaid.

The fair, impetuous, ambitious, Herodias presently made a complete conquest of the weak, unprincipled, Antipas. He soon found himself entangled in an intrigue with the wife of his hospitable brother, though he had long been married to the daughter of a powerful neighbour, Aretas, king of the Nabateans, whose dominions were conterminous with his own, on the south, with Petra for capital. Herodias had been married, by her grandfather Herod, to Herod Boëthos, or Herod Philip, as he was also called, now a man approaching fifty,—to mitigate the misfortunes of her family, left fatherless by his cruel murder of his son Aristobulus. She had had, as her only child, a daughter, Salome, now married to Philip, tetrarch of Iturea, the brother of Antipas, who was now in middle life; Herodias, herself, being a woman of thirty-four or thirty-five, or perhaps, some years older. Divine and human laws have seldom been more shamelessly violated than by Antipas, while he was playing the part, in public, of a zealous defender of religion. The vice in Herodias ran in her veins with the blood of Herod and of his sister Salome, for their worst qualities were revived in her nature. Her husband, who had once been named as Herod's heir, but had been blotted from the will when his mother was detected in the plot of Bagoas, the eunuch, seems to have led an idle and insignificant life as a private man, much to the discontent of his imperious, ambitious wife. She was ready, therefore, to intrigue with a crowned prince, though her brother-in-law, and promised to come to him, as soon as he returned from Rome. It was agreed, however, that Antipas should first divorce his wife, the daughter of Aretas.

Antipas set off to Rome with this arrangement. It was to be carried out as soon as he came back again to his palace at Tiberias, though he, doubtless, looked for trouble in effecting his divorce from the daughter of the Nabatean king. To his satisfaction, however, she had spared him any difficulty. The treachery which, from of old,

had prevailed in the courts of the Herods, had revealed her husband's relations to Herodias, and she resolved to leave him. She asked no more than permission to visit the border fortress, Machaerus, which had formerly belonged to the Herods, but, at the time, was in her father's hands, perhaps as the purchase price, in Eastern fashion, of his daughter. Its hot springs were in great repute as a health resort. Aretas at once took steps to carry her farther off. Conducted by Arab sheikhs, she was led to her family palace at Petra, and her father declared the marriage annulled. Antipas received Machaerus back; whether by treaty, craft, or force, is not known. Perhaps the Arab feared the tetrarch, as one high in the Emperor's favour; perhaps Antipas exchanged the fortress for other concessions. In any case, the peace was not disturbed for the time, and Herodias left her husband, and came to the palace of Tiberias.

The whole shameful transaction had been carried out in the very region of John's earlier ministrations, and had, doubtless, created a great sensation in the districts nearest the Arab kingdom. Public policy felt it a mistake to have repudiated the daughter of a dangerous neighbour; the Law and its representatives denounced as a crime the marriage with a brother's wife. Even in his own family, the hateful marriage, with its double adultery, wrought division, cutting Antipas off from all his blood. It was the weak point of his otherwise cautious reign, which had guarded against offending the religious sensitiveness of the people, and it left his frontiers exposed to the anger of Aretas, in revenge for the insult.

It is possible that John may have spoken of a matter so widely recoted among the people, before he was carried off to Machaerus. But the Gospels expressly inform us, that the fearless man reproved Herod respecting it, face to face, perhaps before all his court. If he had been brought for a show, and let loose this shaft at the sleeping conscience of Antipas, before his partner in guilt and the gay parasites round, no scene could have been more dramatic. But the man who had spoken such words could not be allowed to live. Herodias was determined he should pay for his rashness with his life, and lost no opportunity of working on Antipas to give the command for his execution.

The bitter fruits of the marriage were already springing up, to poison the tetrarch's remaining years. The curse of childlessness, denounced by the Law on such a crime, was fulfilling itself. The father of his repudiated wife threatened war for the insult to his daughter, and Antipas was engrossed by efforts to prepare for it, if he could not prevent it. Long, fierce wrangling passed, after a time, into open hostility, and Antipas was so shamefully beaten that he had to appeal to the Emperor for aid, and kept his throne, for the time, only by his support. Perhaps Jesus referred to this uneasy time when He asked, "What king, going to make war against another king, will not first sit down and consult whether he is able, with

10,000, to meet him that comes against him with 20,000? Otherwise, while he is yet a great way off, having sent an embassy, he asks conditions of peace." To make his condition still more unhappy, John had touched his conscience to the quick by his reproofs. Should he put him to death, and thus, at once, avenge such a liberty with one who wore the purple, and put an end to all fear of political trouble, through the bold man's influence on the people? Herodias sedulously kept alive the struggle in her husband's breast, between conscience and fear, and passion and pride. She herself was doubly touched, for John had recalled her violation of her first duty as a wife, and the ghastly fact that she had been the virtual seducer of him whom she now had in her power. But Antipas, for once, would not give way to the murderous wish of Herodias. He spared the Baptist's life, protected him from the snares of his unscrupulous enemy, and even made his imprisonment bearable, as far as was possible. It was no friendly feeling, however, that moved him thus, but the involuntary homage of even a bad nature to the unbending truth and moral grandeur of his prisoner—a homage, akin to fear—which made him tremble hereafter at the report of the miracles of Jesus, in the belief that it was John risen from the grave, clothed with the supernatural powers of the other world.

"Herod, though in his palace, surrounded with his royal guards, feared him. He knew the Baptist was stronger than he, for truth is mighty, and mightily prevaileth: and being already conscious of his offendings, and having enough to do to keep down the voices of crime and transgression within him, he feared this righteous man, whose words gave such edge to his self-accusations, such point to his remorse. Unarmed, the Baptist daunted him more than an army of men, an embattled city, or a fenced tower, or any other source of physical and outward force. It reminds me of the saying of the first James, when Knox's daughter came to petition for her husband Welsh's pardon. The monarch asked her who she was; she replied, 'The daughter of John Knox.' 'Knox and Welsh,' said he, 'that is a fearful conjunction of bloods. And had your father any sons?' 'No, only three daughters.' 'Had his three daughters been three sons,' said the conscience-stricken monarch, 'I would ill have brinked' (enjoyed) 'my three kingdoms in peace. He may return, if he will consent never to preach again.' 'Sooner than he should consent to that,' said the godly and heroic woman, 'I would kep' (catch as it fell from the block) 'his bloody head here,'—stretching out the matronal apron in which she was attired."

That Antipas thus stood between his prisoner and the Jezebel who thirsted for his death, and, even protected him, in a wild border district where human life was held in no regard, was a noble tribute to the greatness of John, for none but a lofty soul could have made such an impression on the weak, selfish, sensual, knavish being, in whose prison he lay, or could have waked, even in such a nature,

whatever it had of good, to a struggle with overpowering evil. It was, almost, the raising of a Son of Abraham from the stones of the wilderness. The tyrant's alarm and want of resolution, his consciousness of guilt, and involuntary awe, fenced round the life of the Baptist for the time, till the furious woman whose dismissal John had demanded, after vainly trying to gain her end by wild revenge, reached it, at last, by craft.

Antipas had had the good fortune, by no means common with the vassals of Tiberius, to keep his throne for over thirty years, and, like his father, had been accustomed to celebrate the anniversary of his accession, each summer, by a banquet. The time for this had now returned, and an invitation to a grand festivity on the occasion was given to the officers in attendance at Machaerus, the sheikhs of the neighbouring tribes, and the high society within reach, including the lords, chief captains, and first men of Galilee. Persius, the Roman satirist, has left us a notice of such a feast on the "Herod's day," of some of the family, perhaps, of Antipas. He shows us the palace windows brilliantly illuminated and hung with garlands of flowers; the tables spread with every ostentation of luxury, and the wine flowing freely. On this occasion, the mirth and rejoicing ran high. Herodias, herself, was not present, for it is not the custom, even now, in the East, for the women to take part in the festivities of men. But to do honour to the day, and to the company, her daughter Salome, the childless wife of the tetrarch Philip, had broken through the rule of strict seclusion from the other sex, and had condescended, though a princess, and the daughter of kings, to dance before Antipas and his guests. The dancing then in vogue both in Rome and the provinces, from its popularity under Augustus, was very like that of our modern ballet. The dancer did not speak, but acted some story by gestures, movements, and attitudes, to the sound of music. Masks were used in all cases, to conceal the features, but all other parts of the body, especially the hands and arms, were called into action, and a skilful pantomimist could express feelings, passions, and acts, with surprising effect. The subjects of the dance were always mythological, and thus, an abhorrence to strict Jews, as essentially heathen. The dress of the performer, like that of the dancers in our ballet, was planned to show the beauty of the figure to the greatest advantage, though it varied with the characters represented. In the days of Antipas there never was more than one dancer at a time, even when the piece introduced both sexes. Women never performed thus in public, in these earlier times of the empire, but, as in the case of Salome, they did not scruple to act at the private parties of the great.

Salome's ballet was a great success. The revellers were charmed, and the weak head of Antipas, likely made weaker by wine, was fairly turned. He could not give away the humblest village without permission from Tiberius, but, forgetful of this, he vowed, in true

Eastern exaggeration, to do anything the dancer asked, if it were to give her half of his kingdom. Seizing the chance, she was yet too cautious to speak off hand, but retired to consult her mother. Herodias, clutching the opportunity, had no hesitation in her answer—"Ask the head of John the Baptist." Returning at once, she made the bloody request. Chagrined at the advantage taken of him, and alarmed at its probable results, he yet had not the moral courage to refuse it. His honour, he fancied, was compromised, for he had put himself in Salome's power, before the company. Motioning, therefore, to a soldier of the guard, he commanded him to bring John's head. There was no warning given: the entrance of the messenger was the signal for execution, and the head was presently brought in on a salver and given to Salome, who took it out as a welcome present to her mother. The mutilated body, cared for by loving disciples, was, perhaps the same night, laid in a tomb.

It is a weird and ghastly story, but one quite in keeping with the almost grotesquely horrible incidents recorded of the half barbarous courts of the East, and even of that of Rome, in this savage age. Herodotus tells the story of the demand made by Amestris, wife of Xerxes, on a birthday festival of her husband, that he should give up the wife of Masistes to her jealous rage, and how, on her persisting, he fancied he could not, on that day, refuse. No entreaty of the unfortunate prince could avail for his wife, whom he loved; Xerxes having once commanded her to be given up to her rival. Nor is the grim parallel to the fury of Herodias wanting, for the spearmen of Xerxes were forthwith sent by the frantic Amestris, and cut her rival to pieces, throwing her, in fragments, to the dogs.

In the year B.C. 53, after the battle of Karrha, the Parthian King, Orodes, was celebrating the marriage of his son Pacorus, when the actor who played the part of Agavé, in the Bacchae of Euripides, brought in the half wasted head of Crassus on the stage, and the chorus repeated, with loud, triumphant rejoicing, the well-known strophe—

> "We bring from the mountain,
> Borne to our home,
> The royal booty, the bleeding sport."

Nor was Rome itself less savage. Caligula often had men put to torture before his guests at his feasts, and swordsmen, skilled in beheading, amused the table by striking off the heads of prisoners brought in from their dungeons, to let them show their skill. At a public feast at Rome, he ordered the executioner to strike off the hands of a slave accused of having taken a silver plate from one of the couches, and made the poor wretch go round and round the tables with his hands hanging on his breast, from a string round his neck, a board being carried before him, inscribed with his offence.

After the death of the Baptist, Antipas returned to Tiberias, haunted

by the rememberance of his victim. Salome went back to her elderly husband, who had already built a tomb for himself, in Julias Bethsaida, and did not long survive his marriage. Salome, left a widow, once more returned to her mother.

The marriage had been a speculation of Herodias, who hoped thus to get hold of the territory of her neighbour and son-in-law. But the scheme failed, for the tetrarchy was forthwith incorporated with the province of Syria. Antipas, however, still hankered after it, and turned wistful eyes towards it, from his palace at Tiberias, till, at last, it lured him and Herodias to ruin.

"The Baptist had done the Almighty good service—he had not turned back, on any occasion, from his perilous duty—he had kept his Nazarite ritual, both in body and spirit, sustaining the one upon the simplest meat, and the other upon the hardest conditions. The Almighty heard the voice which he spoke always for His Well-beloved Son; He saw that he spoke truth, and held his integrity steadfast unto the end. And, perceiving in His servant such noble and excellent qualities, He resolved to perfect him for a high place in heaven, and so directed his footsteps to the fiery furnace of a court, that the temper of his truth and piety might be purified manifold. And in the fiery furnace He walked with His servant, so that his spirit was not harmed; and having thus annealed his nature to the utmost which this earth could do, He took him hastily away, and placed him among the glorified in heaven."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE TEMPTATION.

The baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, and His consecration immediately after, by the Holy Spirit, were the close of His private, and the inauguration of His public life. Hitherto He had been the unknown and obscure villager of Nazareth: henceforth He entered on His divine mission as the Messiah, or "Anointed" of God. The beginning of His ministry, and the heavenly equipment needed to sustain Him in it, are always referred, by the apostles, themselves, to this critical moment. With them, His commission and special endowment for His mighty work, dated from His baptism. "Ye know," says St. Peter, "what was spoken of throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached, concerning Jesus of Nazareth, that God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit, and with power; who went about doing good, and curing all that were overpowered by the devil, for God was with Him." A mysterious dignity imparted by this heavenly "anointing," filled Him, consciously, with supernatural powers He had not, hitherto, displayed, and raised Him from the subordinate and passive life of Nazareth, to the

high office of "Messenger of the Covenant," "the Messiah promised to the fathers."

In the thirty years of His life in Nazareth, Jesus had done no miracles, and had assumed no authority or public standing as a teacher. On the contrary, He had so withdrawn into the shade of a studied obscurity, and conformed to the daily life of those around, that no one, apparently, suspected Him to be more than the humble villager He seemed.

The baptism in the Jordan, with its mysterious accompaniments—the heavenly dove and the voice of God—marked the dividing line in His life. With such credentials, and such endowments, His call as the Messiah was no longer doubtful. We know nothing of His spiritual history while at Nazareth beyond the fact that His thoughts expanded with His years, for His "keeping on increasing in wisdom" can mean nothing less. Presentiments must have often risen in His mind, but He may have had no assurance that they were trustworthy,—for His Divine nature is a mystery—till formally "anointed with the Holy Spirit, and with power." After His baptism, we can readily fancy Him, during His stay at the Jordan, listening intently to the preaching of John, and watching the excited multitudes, till the conviction forced itself upon Him, that the Law could no longer be the channel of salvation to the sin-stricken, repentant crowds. The gift of the Spirit, and the words of the heavenly voice, would confirm this conviction, and make it for ever certain that the path into which John was introducing his converts, could not, by itself, lead to the fulness of truth, and abiding peace of heart. The opened heavens revealed a new relation of God to man, which must be proclaimed; and in the holy symbol of the dove—the pledge in Noah's day that wrath had turned to mercy—the chosen emblem of the Spirit of God,—a vivid lesson was given that peace could be won back to the troubled soul, and the soul itself renewed, only by the soft and gentle influence of heavenly grace. Set apart, by so august a consecration, as God's anointed, the regeneration of the race, and the reconciliation of earth and heaven, were henceforth entrusted to His hands. He had, till now, been silent; but forthwith began to proclaim that the kingdom of God was no longer, as John had taught, near at hand, but had already come, and at once assumed and exercised the highest kingly authority, as its Head; working miracles as a proof of His superhuman dignity; bearing Himself in the Temple as in His Father's House; discoursing, as the Messiah, with Nicodemus. He even took to Himself, from this time, the name of "The Son of Man;" derived from the vision of the Messiah in the Book of Daniel, and universally accepted, from that source, as the symbol of Messianic rank. His baptismal consecration was presently followed by His taking His place as king in the new theocracy; ruling, and legislating, and displaying all kingly power and dignity, henceforth, as the Messiah of God—Himself Divine.

His baptism was, thus, the birth-hour of Christianity. Crowds, sunk in national and spiritual degradation, thronged the banks of the Jordan, roused by the new Elias to a sense of their wants, but left to expectancy for their future satisfaction. They longed for a last needful word, but John was unable to add it. He could speak of the approach of the Kingdom of God, but he was only its herald, and could not act as its head. The Messiah, who was to give it life and form, was yet to come. His work was a mighty movement, with no adequate end: his converts a mighty host, without a watchword; his exhortations excited a deep yearning, which they left unsatisfied. Such a spectacle must have stirred the soul of Jesus to its lowest depths. Even before His consecration as the Messiah, He must have pondered the condition of His people, and longed, with all the love of His Divine nature, to heal their troubles. It must have been so even in Nazareth. The consecration at the Jordan only stamped with heavenly approval the purposes that had been ripening in His breast from His earliest years. We cannot think of one like Jesus, so profoundly religious, and so divinely compassionate, as at any time indifferent to the supreme question of the reconciliation of man to God. The days and nights passed, in later years, in solitary prayer, in the wilderness, or in the mountains, were, doubtless, only the repetition of far earlier communings with His Father, and with His own soul. But the divine certainty; the imperative signal, that He should arise and gird Himself to the mighty task of winning back the world to God: the awful summons for which He waited with hushed stillness, He first read in the sights and revelations of the Jordan baptism. The heavenly consecration was the divine sanction of His long-cherished but dimly realized purpose. The accompaniments of His baptism made Him the head of the new spiritual theocracy, and laid on Him the burden of giving Himself wholly to its establishment.

Everything around corroborated the indications of the heavenly vision. The events predicted as inaugurating the advent of the Messiah, were realizing themselves before Him, for had not Elias come again, in the person of John, and had not the nation consecrated itself, in preparation for the Messiah? He, only, was wanting, whom the times themselves could not give: the Coming One, who should set up, in its fulness, the Divine Kingdom already begun. No wonder that John, as he daily announced both the Kingdom and the Messiah, with unwavering faith, and searched each group that came before him, in hopes of finding, at last, the chosen of God, fixed his eyes with a settled and clear conviction on Jesus, as He for whom he was looking. The attitude of the Baptist towards Him, was a corroboration of all the rest. His own consciousness of being the Eternal Son of God; the spectacle before Him; the longings of His pity and holy love; the wants of the times; and, above all, the voice and sign from Heaven, made it clear, that "lowly in heart" as He was, He was nevertheless the Messiah.

The earliest chapters of the Gospels show with what majestic fulness and dignity the Saviour rose to the height of this great commission. Recognizing John as a noble servant of God, He yet took His place, from the first, above him. John stayed behind in his Jewish limitations, leaving the great work imperfect, but Jesus from the beginning stood a King over the souls of men, dispensing promises, scattering heavenly gifts, calming fears, satisfying the cravings of the heart, raising an invisible and deathless kingdom in the human spirit, and bearing Himself as, at once, God and man.

It is, of course, wholly beyond us to conceive the mental struggle raised by such a position, when it first opened before our Lord. It committed Him to meet and overcome the Prince of Darkness, to bear the sins of the world, as the spotless Lamb of God, to withstand the opposition and hatred of men, their indifference, mockery, misconception, and insensibility of heart; to endure, in fact, the life, and at last to die the death, of a martyr. Still more, it opened before Him an awful isolation as the one Holy Being in a world, and this alone, might well fill a nature like His, of trembling sensibility, and loving tenderness, with overpowering emotion. No wonder it is said He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. The mind needs to collect itself to survey the ground, and gird itself up to its task, planning its efforts, and guarding against failure, before entering on any great enterprise, and He was "in all things like His brethren." It is in retirement, and sacred communion with God and one's own soul, that we refresh ourselves for our greatest tasks. It was in the solitudes of the mountains that Moses prepared himself for the work of creating a people for God. The Baptist came from the wilderness to enter on his work as a Reformer; and St. Paul, after his conversion, withdrew himself for three years, no one knows whither, to make ready for his commission to the nations. The wilderness, with its sacred quiet and seclusion, was alone fitted for the retirement of Jesus.

To what part He withdrew Himself is not stated, but St. Mark adds the vivid note that He was "with the wild beasts," which excludes the idea of even scattered human population. In this vast and lonely chamber of meditation and prayer He remained for forty days, in intense concentration of soul on the work before Him. To be alone was to have every thought rise in turn: to have human weakness plead for indulgence, and human fears counsel safety. Nor could He escape graver trials. The Prince of Darkness had often, doubtless, attempted before to overcome Him, for "He was tempted in all points like as we are." It was meet that the Anointed of God should be put to the test. The struggles through which the soul comes to clearness, power, and decision, are themselves temptations, for they imply that the mind has not yet emerged into the calmness of settled triumph. We cannot conceive of Jesus escaping suggestions, to have entertained which would have been fatal. Temptations must needs

enter the firmest and holiest soul, else it cannot be said to be tempted at all. They are the more inevitable the greater the task to be undertaken, and serve the high end of separating it from possible error. To let Satan do his worst was the needful preliminary to the final overthrow of his kingdom, for success or failure at the first step determined the future.

The specific temptations recorded in the Gospels belong to the last days of our Lord's seclusion, for, as the culmination of Satan's assaults, they were subtilely reserved till nature was well-nigh exhausted, and the power of resistance weakest. But, though critical hours in life may justly be regarded as especially times of temptation, an existence, like ours, which is a constant choice between good and evil, is, throughout, a probation. We know little of the spiritual world, and cannot say how far our actions are determined for evil by ourselves, or how far active Satanic influences may affect us, for, as in our better, so in our guilty, acts, the mind is conscious of a deliberate freedom of will. Like Adam, we feel that we are "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall." Our character is but the stamp on our souls of the free choice of good or evil we have made through life. From childhood to the grave, the road is open to us all, on either side, from the straight path of right. Nor are the only failures those of open act. The soul is, in itself, a world, and evil thoughts count as acts with the Eternal, if not at once repelled. Yet they must rise at every moment, for the choice of right implies freedom to choose the opposite. Milton is true to nature when he makes Satan tell the Saviour that he had heard the angels' song at Bethlehem, and

> "From that time seldom have I ceased to eye
> Thy infancy, thy childhood, and thy youth,
> Thy manhood last, though yet in private bred."

"He was a child, and grew in the grace and faculties of His nature, like another child, into mature manhood, struggling with the temptations, and spoiling the tempters of each stage of life." The probation of the desert was only an outburst, more than usually violent, of that which had attended Him, all through, as a condition of His humanity.

There are, however, supreme moments of trial, victory in which decides the colour of our life, and breaks the force of future temptations in the same directions, and such was that of the wilderness retirement. It is part of the discipline of God, to make His servants perfect through suffering, and the Son of Man, the ideal of humanity, could not be made an exception. Retirement was indispensable for preparation. He needed to survey His great commission in all its aspects, to determine the course to be pursued in carrying it out, and realize the difficulties and dangers He had to expect. The transition from the life of Nazareth—private, calm, contemplative, unknown, industrious in a lowly vocation—to that of a public teacher, and, still more, of the Messiah, sent from God, raised a multitude of

thoughts which hurried Him away to solitude, and made Him forget, for the time, even the wants of nature.

In this commotion of the bosom, conflicting resolutions and courses must have readily commended themselves. In the Scriptures themselves, opposite characteristics of the Messiah might seem to present themselves. The future Saviour was pictured in one page as triumphing: in another, as lowly and suffering. Man was to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, but Israel had been fed with manna, miraculously supplied. Angels were promised to protect the servants of God, but it was forbidden to tempt the divine goodness. The world was promised to the friend of God, and, on the other hand, the mark of true godliness was humility.

Moreover, had not Moses been appointed by God as the Law-giver of Israel? had not the constitution of the nation as a theocracy, with its Temple service and sacrifices, been divinely instituted? Had not a chosen priesthood been set apart by God, and were not the promises of life and prosperity linked with the observance of the Mosaic Law? Was not the promised Saviour described in Scripture as a Royal Hero, who would restore the glory and power of the House of David, and as a conqueror and ruler of the nations?

Such thoughts must not only have raised temptations and disturbance in the mind of Jesus: they necessitated His breaking away utterly from the traditional interpretation of Scripture current in His day, and forced Him to take a position of direct antagonism, as regarded it, to the whole body of the Rabbis, and of the dominant Jewish schools. There was, thus, no other way than to separate Himself in spirit from the theocracy, and prepare for a life and death struggle with the ecclesiastical authorities of the nation. He must take a position, inconceivably painful to a lowly and pure soul like His, which exposed Him to the appearance of sinning against God, and of wilful disobedience to His ordained representatives. On the one hand, He had before Him the allurements of a career of success and honour, with wealth, power, and fame: on the other, He would be branded as criminal and blasphemous, and gain only shame, poverty, and death. But through all these clouds, His spirit, like the sun, held on in its triumphant course, to emerge in full glory, and scatter them from its path.

It was clear that the theocracy had served its day, and could not be made the vehicle of the great work Jesus was to inaugurate. Religion had outgrown it, and demanded something loftier, more spiritual and more universal, and this Jesus had come to supply. Instead of forms and outward precepts, He was about to announce the grand conception of a new kingdom of God—a kingdom in which the heart would be supreme. Winning it over to God and holiness, He would, by it, transform man into the image of God, and earth into that of heaven. It was to be a reign of holy love in the breast, instead of a worthless service of rites and forms. The gran-

deur of such an ideal it is impossible adequately to realize. Till then, outward priesthoods, local temples, the slaying of sacrifices, pompous rites and ceremonial law had been deemed essential. But the consecration of Jesus as the Messiah, not of the Jews alone, but of mankind, made the whole obsolete, as incompatible with a universal religion. No wonder His soul was well-nigh overpowered. He must stand alone against the world: must pass sentence on all its religious wisdom, and must create a new world of spiritual thought. The grand originality of soul which this required, if we may use the word without irreverence, has nothing approaching it in the history of our race.

So vast a conception must have raised endless questions, doubts, and struggles, the more it was pondered, and the more all it involved was perceived. But a lofty spiritual nature like His must have raised Him wholly above all the human littlenesses, which turn the soul from great undertakings. The thought of self-preservation, in the prospect of immeasurable danger, would not affect Him. He who forgot hunger and thirst, in communion with God, and taught that to be ready to lose one's life was a fundamental condition of interest in the divine kingdom, had no craven thoughts of His own safety.

He was infinitely above every consideration of personal interest. Neither the pleasures of life, nor the delights or duties of His great work, could make Him value life for the sake of enjoying them. Even at the approach of death, the only regret that escapes Him is that He leaves His disciples. The tenderly human shadow that passed over His soul at Gethsemane and Calvary, was only the inevitable tribute to human weakness, which all must yield. The greatness of His task alone weighed Him down. He stood single against spiritual and worldly powers, against a people who, from the days of Moses to the last prophet, had shown themselves lukewarm, obstinate, and slow to move, capricious, fretful, and spiritually dead. The revival, under John, like many before, promised to be a mere fire of thorns.

Even what we may call the details of His great work must have weighed heavily on Jesus, in these momentous weeks. Milton makes Him wander far into the depths of the desert—

> "Musing and much revolving in His breast,
> How best the mighty work He might begin
> Of Saviour to mankind, and which way first
> Publish His God-like office, now mature."

The popular Jewish belief that the Messiah would be an earthly king, found no response in His bosom, and this, in itself, darkened His future.

He had seen the pressure put by the Rabbis on John, to force him to their side. Would not His own opposition to them cause, at least, indifference and neglect, perhaps, even hatred? He could only be a spiritual Saviour: they wished a political. He had no ambition, and

contemned earthly power. Even if the people refused to hear, He must still witness to the truth. Then, should His kingdom be raised by human agency, or by the arm of God? Might not the Almighty think it meet to overthrow all opposition of the Prince of Darkness, Rome, and the Jewish hierarchy, and establish the new divine kingdom by irresistible force? But He was not led away by such suggestions, however specious. Discarding all thought of playing a great part among men, He chose lowliness and obscurity for Himself, and the smallest beginnings for His kingdom, letting it win its way slowly by the conquest of single souls, as was demanded by its very nature. It was to rest on loyalty and love, which must rise spontaneously in individual breasts. Success and results were only subordinate. His work lay clear before Him: to live and to die as the Lamb of God—the incarnation of infinite love, attracting humanity by its holy charms, His life an example, His death an atonement.

This was the great result of His long, still, wilderness retirement. He had surveyed the whole ground: had communed much with His own thoughts, and, above all, with His Father, and came back to the world again in victorious serenity, to proclaim Himself as coming in the name of God, with no lingering fear of His task, or of any spiritual or human opposition.

The mental struggle of these weeks must, in any case, have been intense, but it became unspeakably harder by the presence of the powers of evil, who sought to overcome Him face to face. Nor is this only metaphor. Jesus, Himself, always assigns temptation to the direct action of evil spirits on the soul. A subtle and mighty personality is always presupposed, ruling a mysterious kingdom of evil, from which he can only be cast out when bound by one stronger than himself. As the Messiah, Jesus proclaimed Himself come to destroy the power of this great enemy of God and man, and, throughout all His ministry, constantly assailed his kingdom, casting out devils from the possessed, as, at this time, He bound and subdued Satan himself.

It is not necessary to suppose an outward and corporeal presence of the arch-enemy. He is never spoken of as visible, except when Jesus saw him fall, as lightning, from heaven. He is invisible when he tempts us, which we know he does, for he deceives the whole world, and there is no need to suppose that he was present otherwise with our Lord, than by raising suggestions in His sinless mind. To act upon the thoughts may have been the mode of Satan's attack, with Christ as with ourselves.

The three instances of the great enemy's attempts, recorded in the Gospels, illustrate the subtlety of his advances. Worn with hunger, Christ is approached with the suggestion that if, indeed, He were what He claimed to be, the Son of God, it was surely unnecessary to suffer as He did, when by a word He might command that the stones of the desert around Him should be made bread. To possess un-

limited power for specific ends, and refrain from using it to our own advantage, even in a pressing and apparently innocent case, is an ideal of virtue which it would be vain to expect in any ordinary man. No temptation is more difficult to resist than the prompting to do what seems needful for self-preservation, when abundant means are in our hands. But Jesus did not, for a moment, allow Himself to question His duty. The miraculous gifts newly conferred on Him, had been given, not for His private use, but for the glory of His Father; not as a human convenience, but as spiritual aids in His work as the Messiah. As a man, He was dependent on the care and love of His Heavenly Father, and to use His miraculous powers as the Messiah, for His personal benefit, would be to take Himself out of His Father's hands, and to show distrust of His loving care. But His sublime trust in the infinite goodness and power of God repelled the temptation. God had brought Him hither, and would bring Him thence. Bread was not the only means by which HE could support Him. His word could create what means He pleased. Others had been preserved by Him in unforeseen ways. The tribes in the wilderness had been fed by manna. Moses and Elijah had been sustained in the desert, though bread was wanting. It was not for Him to think Himself forgotten, and to take His life into His own hands, as if unsafe in God's. He would wait till HE gave Him what He chose, in the way that pleased Him.

The second temptation, following the order in the third Gospel, was no less subtle. The Kingdom of the Messiah as then understood, and as Jesus, no doubt, had from youth been taught, was to be an universal temporal dominion. In the solitude of the desert, His mind filled with the thought of His mysterious consecration as God's Anointed, the thought was insinuated by the great enemy, that He might well ponder what course to pursue. On one hand, the path led to supreme honour, and unequalled glory. Had not the Psalmist himself spoken of the princes of the earth as subject to the Messiah, and did not the prophet say that the Gentiles should come to His light, and kings to the brightness of His rising, and that the wealth of the world would be brought to Him? On the other hand, the way led through shame, poverty, neglect, derision, insult, and suffering, in all probability to an ignominious death. The dream of ambition and splendour would have shone with inconceivable attractions to ordinary minds, against such a background. But it was not left to mere vague suggestions. By that mysterious power which spirit has of acting upon spirit, the adversary raised, within the soul of Jesus, a vision the most seductive, to enforce his subtlety. It seemed as if the desert vanished from around Him, and that the tempter and tempted One stood together on a high mountain, from whose top the kindled fancy appeared to see all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory. Milton paints the vision with matchless power. Fair rivers, winding through rich pastures, and fertile corn-fields; huge

cities, high towered, the seats of mightiest monarchies; regions beyond the conquests of Alexander to the east, and far as Rome to the west. Did not the prophets say that the rightful Sovereign of all this was God's Messiah?

But if so,—the foul suggestion continued,—how was this world-wide empire, in which, as God's Anointed, He might reign in righteousness, blessing the nations, and filling the earth with the knowledge of God, to be gained? Great enterprises need great means. He was unknown, without friends, of humble birth, the son of a carpenter, and bred up in poverty in a Galilæan village. Why not put Himself at the head of His nation, which was ready to follow Him if He displayed His glory, and lead them against the heathen, using His divine power to shatter all opposition? Had not God of old divided the sea and the rivers, to make a path for His people, led by His prophet? Had He not rebuked kings for their sake? Had He not promised that the enemies of His Anointed should be made His footstool, and that He Himself would be at His right hand, in the day of His wrath, to make Him reign over the heathen, and smite the people of many lands?

It is impossible to conceive a temptation more difficult to resist. Feeling that, as the Messiah, He was destined to universal monarchy, and conscious that His rule would be the happiness of the world; supported, apparently, by the voice of prophets, speaking for God, in using force to establish this heavenly empire, and Himself instinct with miraculous power, which would make resistance vain, it might seem as if He could hardly fail to yield to it. Judas the Galilæan had risen thus a few years before; and his memory was revered. But Satan had spread his subtlest temptations in vain. With the self-restraint becoming a sinless nature, He resisted the dazzling vision. Deliberately rejecting the thought of basing His empire on force; with a lofty grandeur of soul, He chose to found it on the love, rather than on the fears, or compelled submission of mankind. Having come, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them, He would use His miraculous power only for good to man, and for the glory of His Father, trusting Himself to Him, without other defence or care than His unfailing wisdom and love. The heavenly gifts He held should be used only where they brought no personal advantage to Himself. As a man, He was, and would remain, meek and lowly; His gifts as Messiah would be used only for spiritual ends.

Milton, with striking force, has made Him say—

> "Victorious deeds
> Flamed in thy heart, heroic acts—one while
> To rescue Israel from the Roman yoke;
> Men to subdue, and quell, o'er all the earth,
> Brute violence and proud tyrannic power,
> Till truth were freed, and equity restored:
> Yet held it more humane, more heavenly, first
> By winning words to conquer willing hearts,
> And make persuasion do the work of fear."

From first to last, Jesus refused to exercise His supernatural power to establish His kingdom by outward means, and, indeed, it was because of His persistent refusal to do so that His nation rejected Him. Assent to the temptation seemed to Him like an act of homage to the Prince of this world, His adversary, for force and violence are characteristics of *his* sway. As the Prince of Peace, He would have nothing to do with strife. The temptation lost its power as He uttered the words "Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

He had now been tempted by hunger and by ambition: there remained another possible opening for the enemy; through the avenue of spiritual pride. Earthly glory had had no attractions for Him, but He might be vain of His newly acquired Messiahship, and willing to display His supernatural powers for mere empty effect, and to flatter His own self-love. To disguise the aim, a sacred gloss was at hand. Instead of evil,—compliance would only show, in another form, that absolute dependence upon God, by which He had repelled the appeal to His natural wants. The Arch Magician had brought before the eye of His mind, perhaps also of His body, the pomp and glory of the world. He had, before, wrought upon the natural desire there is in all men for fame and dignity; but the vast illusion had been treated as an idle show, unworthy of regard. Would a proposal, however, to inaugurate His Messiahship by what would justify His utmost claims, be as firmly turned aside? Jesus was no angel, or mere spirit without human desires. It was of the very essence of His being to be touched and moved by all that influences men at large, and nothing could be more natural than at once to vindicate His rank and authority, and open the way for His ministrations, by some startling miracle. No place was so well fitted for such a demonstration as Jerusalem, the holy city, and no spot in it so suited as the Temple, the centre of the national religion, and the chosen dwelling-place of God. Milton makes Satan bear our Lord

> "Over the wilderness, and o'er the plain;
> Till, underneath them, fair Jerusalem,
> The Holy City, lifted high her towers,
> And higher yet the glorious temple rear'd
> Her pile, far off appearing like a mount
> Of alabaster, topp'd with golden spires;
> There, on the highest pinnacle, he set
> The Son of God."

Some famous spire of the Temple buildings must be intended, though we are no longer able to explain the allusion. It may be it was some pinnacle of the great three-aisled Royal Porch, which ran along the southern side of the Temple area, overlooking the valley of Hinnom, from a dizzy height. Perhaps it was the season of one of the great feasts, when countless pilgrims were gathered in Jerusalem, who would carry the report of any miraculous display throughout the

earth. That the suggestion raised in the mind of Jesus to glorify His office, and lighten His great work, by an astounding miracle, might seem natural and specious, is only to suppose Him human; and that it should take the form of His casting Himself down from an airy height, to alight in the distant valley beneath, might seem no less so. It is not necessary to conceive of a bodily translation to the Temple roof: the true place of temptation is the soul, in which all the scenery and accessories of any prospect can be created by the imagination in a moment. To make it more attractive, a text of Scripture was at hand, for had not God said, "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee, and in their hands they shall bear Thee up?" So, Shakespere makes Richard of Gloucester twist the sacred text—

> "But then I sigh, and with a piece of Scripture,
> Tell them, that God bids us do good for evil.
> And thus I clothe my naked villany
> With old odd ends, stolen forth of Holy Writ;
> And seem a saint when most I play the devil."

Bassanio's words never had a more fitting application—

> "In religion
> What damnèd error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
> Hiding the grossness with fair ornament?"

But whatever hope the great enemy may have had in this last attempt was vain. To the perfect humility of Jesus, any idea of display or ostentation had no charms; nor could He, who would rather bear the extreme of hunger than seem to distrust His Heavenly Father, by using miraculous power in His own behalf, be for a moment tempted to employ it for any mere personal honour. Nor, moreover, would He dream of claiming miraculous aid from God for that which had not the sanction of His command. His promise of protection vouchsafed aid only when the danger to be averted rose in the discharge of prescribed duty. The appeal to spiritual pride or vanity fell as harmlessly as the temptations already tried. It had been whispered to the soul of Jesus, as the vision rose before Him—"Go and cast Thyself down: is it not written that the angels shall bear Thee up?" But one brief sentence turned the wizard gold to dross—"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

Mysterious in some aspects, the wilderness retirement of our Lord, with its fires of temptation, putting Him to the utmost proof, becomes an inevitable passage in His life, when we think of Him as a man like ourselves, though sinless. His soul could reveal its beauty only by victory in a life-long struggle with temptation, such as happens to us all. Nor can we think of a Messiah, who should draw all men to Him as the ideal of humanity, except as treading the same path as His brethren. It is a vital error, therefore, to represent these temptations as mere outward pictures of the imagination, playing before Him, or as mere emotions of pleasure or aversion, which left His will

unassailed, and were dissipated or quenched in a moment, on their rising. It is no less so to regard them as mere illusions of the senses, passing like clouds over His mind, and leaving His inner being wholly undisturbed.

If there had been no more than this, there could have been no struggle, no pause and agony of soul—that is, no real temptation. The Gospels know nothing of such an unreal probation. They show us temptations throughout, plying His will, and seeking to paralyze it, even to the length of suggesting a withdrawal from His work as the Messiah. What else can have caused His prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, or the touching outburst, "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." He was proved and tried, from His youth to Gethsemane, and, like us, might have yielded, though, in fact, offering a transcendent contrast, in His unbroken victory over all temptation.

The episode in the wilderness was, indeed, subtler in its seductions than is needed for grosser natures like ours. He had to repel, as evil, what to others might have seemed the ideal of good. It was no irresolution, from pride, or vanity, or fear, that troubled Him; His soul was oppressed by the greatness of His divine office; His lowly humility was like to sink under its burden. With us, there needs a distinct prohibition to make acts sinful, and at very step we hesitate to reject where there seems room to doubt. With Jesus there was no such waving line of compromise. To deviate from the direct command of God, for any end, however holy, was, to Him, a sin. The contrast of Divine and human, or Satanic, rose before Him with such a clear decision, that the least divergence from the express letter of His Father's will was instantly rejected. He turned away from what the noblest souls before Him had cherished as holy visions, as from temptations of the Prince of Darkness. He not only triumphed, but showed, in His perfect obedience to His Heavenly Father, an image of the ideal and stainless holiness required from us all.

This divine purity, inflexible, unswerving, moving ever directly forward, acknowledging only THE RIGHT,—rejecting all else; and finding peace only in complete, loving submission to the will of God, rests with unique glory over all the life of Jesus, but especially over His temptation in the desert. It gives the supreme beauty to His life, and was its strength and power. There could be no hesitation where all was thus simplified: where only God, or the world and the devil, beckoned onwards.

Through life, as in the wilderness, His choice was instinctive and instantaneous, between God and sin. Good and evil were, to Him, light and darkness, and it was vain to tempt Him even to approach the cloudy, doubtful, dividing line. The desert had served its purpose. The crisis had passed. Yielding Himself into the hands of God, it was exchanged for the joys of angel ministration.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RETURN FROM THE WILDERNESS.

His seclusion in the desert had been the turning point in the life of Jesus. He had left Nazareth to visit John, an humble Galilæan villager. He returned, the consecrated Messiah, no longer oppressed by the responsibilities and difficulties of His great office, but ready to come before Israel as the Lamb of God, who should take away the sins of the world.

Can we picture to ourselves the personal appearance of the Saviour at this momentous point in His career? We know that He was still in the glory of early manhood, but can we realize Him more closely?

It is fatal to the hope of a reliable portrait, that the Jewish horror of images as idolatrous, extended to the likeness of the human face or form. No hint is given of Christ's appearance in the New Testament; and the early Church, in the absence of all guiding facts, had to fall back on imagination. Itself sorely oppressed, it naturally pictured its founder through the medium of its own despondency. Had he been an illustrious Roman or Greek, the Grecian love of beauty would, doubtless, have created an ideal of faultless perfection, but in its first, dark years, the sorely-tried Church fancied their Lord's visage and form as "marred more than those of other men," and that He must have had no attractions of personal beauty. Justin Martyr speaks of Him as without beauty or attractiveness, and of mean appearance. Clement of Alexandria describes Him as of an uninviting appearance, and almost repulsive. Tertullian says He had not even ordinary human beauty, far less heavenly. Origen went so far as to say that He was "small in body and deformed, as well as low-born," and that "His only beauty was in His soul and life." About the same time, however, the Christian Gnostics, who had not such an antipathy to heathen art, began to make likenesses of Him of another type, in paintings, gems, or metal, and small statues of Him, which they crowned and honoured in the heathen fashion. The features were said to have been copied from a portrait, fancifully thought to have been taken by order of Pilate. The ideal, however, prevailed more and more, for the half-heathen sects who used these likenesses had the Greek feeling that the gods must needs be divinely beautiful. In the third century the conception thus invented found its way into the private chapel of the emperor Severus, by the side of illustrious kings and emperors, and of "the holy souls," of Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius, and other worthies. It is possible that degrading caricatures of Jesus, which had become common among the heathen, led to this nobler conception of His beauty.

The triumph of Christianity over heathenism found a partial revenge

in the footing gained in the Church for a more kindly estimate of what had now lost its religious power. The first Christian art bearing on Jesus—that of the catacombs—was, however, purely symbolical. The figure of a fish stood for His name, from the significance of the Greek letters in the word that expressed the idea, or He was represented by the symbol of a lamb, or of a shepherd. After a time, the further ideal of a teacher of mankind was added, and, gradually, in the fourth century, He was pictured as a child, after which it was an easy step to portray Him on the Cross. With the general introduction of such likenesses, the idea of any repulsive appearance was necessarily irreconcilable. Eusebius, of Cæsarea, describes a statue which he himself saw at Panias, or Cæsarea Philippi, the reputed birthplace and residence of the woman who was healed of the issue of blood. "At the gates of her house," says he, "on a raised pedestal, stands a brazen image of a woman on her bended knee, with her hands stretched out before her like one entreating. Opposite her is an image of a man, erect, of the same materials, in a full pallium, stretching out his hand to the woman." "Before her feet," he adds, "and on the same pedestal, a strange kind of plant grows, which rises as high as the hem of the brazen garment, and is an antidote to all kinds of diseases. This statue, they say, is a statue of Jesus Christ." Unfortunately, the credulity which believed in the miraculous plant is a poor guarantee for the worth of a vague, popular fancy as to the statue. It was, doubtless, a relic of Grecian art, transformed by a fond reverence into a memorial of Jesus. There can be no doubt, however, that paintings, claiming to be actual resemblances of our Lord, of Peter, and of Paul, were to be found in the time of Eusebius, for he says that he himself had seen them, and thought them old thanks-memorials of devout heathen who had reverenced Christ and honoured Him in this way, as they were accustomed to honour their own gods.

The old conception of the appearance of Jesus, borrowed from the words of Isaiah, had now finally given place to one which exalted His beauty to the utmost, as the natural outward expression of the divine purity and perfection of His inner being. Gregory of Nyssa applies the imagery of the Song of Solomon to His person, no less than to His doctrine. Jerome embodies in his words the glorious ideal which Christian art was afterwards to develop, basing the thought of Him, no longer on the description of the suffering "servant of God," in Isaiah, but on the words of the forty-fifth Psalm—"Thou art fairer than the children of men." "Assuredly," says he, "that splendour and majesty of the hidden divinity, which shone even in His human countenance, could not but attract, at first sight, all beholders. Unless he had had something heavenly in His appearance, the apostles would not immediately have followed Him." Chrysostom tells us that "the Heavenly Father poured out on Him, in full streams, that personal beauty which is distilled only drop by drop upon mortal man;" and Augustine, with his wonted vigorous eloquence, says, that "He was

beautiful in His mother's bosom, beautiful in the arms of His parents, beautiful on the cross, and beautiful in the sepulchre." But that this glowing language was only metaphor is beyond dispute, from the words of Augustine himself. "Of His appearance," says he, "we are wholly ignorant, for the likenesses of Him vary entirely, according to the fancy of the artist." Different races had already created distinct and different ideals, in harmony with their local standards of perfection. The old conception of His being without form or beauty did not, however, at once lose its power. St. Basil clung to it strenuously, and the monks of his order are said to have reproduced it in paintings so late as the eighth century. The austere Cyril of Alexandria went so far as to maintain that He was "mean in appearance beyond all the sons of men," a proof, in its very contrast with the then prevailing conception, that there was no historical portrait to which to appeal, nor even a traditional ideal respecting our Lord's appearance.

Images of Christ met at first with earnest opposition, partly because it seemed impossible adequately to represent the glorified Saviour in human form, and partly, no doubt, because heretic sects were the first to introduce them. Cyril of Alexandria is credited with having brought them into the service of the Church. Once in some measure sanctioned, their use, especially in the East, spread far and wide, and legends were invented to support their authenticity as likenesses of the Saviour. John of Damascus, in his fiery zeal in the great controversy on the use of images, sought to paralyze the opposition of the iconoclast emperor Constantine Copronymus, by bringing forward a legend which we first meet at the close of the fifth century, that Abgarus, king of Edessa, had once sent a painter to Jesus to take His portrait, but the artist failed, from the dazzling brightness of the Saviour's features. Jesus, the legend went on to say, honouring the spirit that had prompted the attempt, impressed His likeness on the cloth with which He was wont to wipe His brow, and sent it to Abgarus. But, though a letter of Abgarus to Jesus, and of Jesus to Abgarus, are noticed as early as the middle of the second century, by Justin Martyr, this wondrous story of the miraculous portrait appears only as an addition of centuries later.

Not to be outdone, the Western Church created its own version of this wondrous legend in that of Veronica, a fabled saint of Jerusalem, who, seeing Jesus pass, on His way to Calvary, His face streaming with the blood of the crown of thorns, unwound the cloth of her turban and gave it Him that He might wipe His brow. In return, it is said, the loving disciple received, on the cloth, an imprinted likeness of her Lord, not calm and peaceful, however, like that of Edessa, but saddened by pain and sorrow. A third miraculous likeness of Christ's whole body was averred to have been left on the linen in which He had been wrapped in the sepulchre, and it was said that this passed into the possession of Nicodemus, and then to the Christians of Jeru-

salem, from whom, after passing through wonderful fortunes, it was brought at last, in the year 1578, to Turin, where it now is. Veronica's cloth is now in St. Peter's, at Rome, though Milan, in northern Italy, and Jaen, in Spain, both boast that they have the authentic relic!

The earliest images of Christ, as has been said, were those introduced among the Gnostics, and of these two, at least, with some claim to authenticity, are still extant. Like the images of Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and other sages, which these strange sects consecrated along with that of the Saviour, they are small, and rather medallions than busts. The one is of stone, with a head of Christ, young and beardless, in profile—the name χριδτος (Christos) in Greek characters, and the symbolical fish, below. The other is a kind of medal, representing Christ with His hair parted over His forehead, covering the ears, and falling down on the shoulders. It has the name of Jesus, in Hebrew, below it. Perhaps it was the work of some Jewish Christian. In the fifteenth century, the historian Nicephorus ventured on a fuller sketch of the person of Christ than had been previously given, and it may be well to quote it, if only to reproduce the conception formed by the Church of the Middle Ages. "I shall describe," says Nicephorus, "the appearance of our Lord, as handed down to us from antiquity. He was very beautiful. His height was fully seven spans; His hair bright auburn, and not too thick, and was inclined to wave in soft curls. His eyebrows were black and arched, and His eyes seemed to shed from them a gentle golden light. They were very beautiful. His nose was prominent; His beard lovely, but not very long. He wore His hair, on the contrary, very long, for no scissors had ever touched it, nor any human hand, except that of His mother when she played with it in His childhood. He stooped a little, but His body was well formed. His complexion was that of the ripe brown wheat, and His face like His mother's, rather oval than round, with only a little red in it, but through it there shone dignity, intelligence of soul, gentleness, and a calmness of spirit never disturbed. Altogether, He was very like His divine and immaculate mother."

What the imaginary description of Christ by Nicephorus has been in the Eastern Church, that of the fictitious letter of Lentulus to the Roman Senate has been to the Western. It first appeared at the close of the fifteenth century, when the works of Anselm were collected and printed, and is the forgery of some monk who sought a good end by one of the pious frauds then very widely in favour. The internal evidence alone shows that it is a mere fabrication, and as even Nicephorus makes no allusion to it, its date may safely be assumed as later than his lifetime. "There has appeared," says Lentulus, "and still lives, a man of great virtue, called Jesus Christ, and, by His disciples, the Son of God. He raises the dead, and heals the sick. He is a man tall in stature, noble in appearance, with a reverend

countenance, which at once attracts and keeps at a distance those beholding it. His hair is waving and curly: a little darker and of richer brightness, where it flows down from the shoulders. It is divided in the middle, after the custom of the Nazarenes (or Nazarites). His brow is smooth, and wondrously serene, and His features have no wrinkles, nor any blemish, while a red glow makes His cheeks beautiful. His nose and mouth are perfect. He has a full ruddy beard, the colour of His hair, not long, but divided into two. His eyes are bright, and seem of different colours at different times. He is terrible in His threatenings; calm in His admonitions; loving and loved; and cheerful, but with an abiding gravity. No one ever saw Him smile, but He often weeps. His hands and limbs are perfect. He is gravely eloquent, retiring, and modest, the fairest of the sons of men."

It may be interesting to add to these older ideals that of a writer of the present day. "Our eyes were restlessly attracted to Him," says Delitzsch, in one of his beautiful stories, "for He was the centre of the group. He was not in soft clothing of byssus and silk, like the courtiers of Tiberias or Jerusalem, nor did He wear long trailing robes, like some of the Pharisees. On His head was a white keffiyeh —a square of linen doubled so that a corner fell down on each shoulder, and on the back; a fillet or *agbal* round the head, keeping it in its place. On His body He wore a tunic, which reached to His wrists and to His feet, and over this a blue tallith, with the prescribed tassels, of blue and white, at the four corners, hung down so that the under garment, which was grey, striped with red, was little seen. His feet shod with sandals, not shoes, were only visible now and then, as He walked or moved."

"He was a man of middle size, with youthful beauty, still, in His face and form. The purity and charm of early manhood blended in His countenance with the ripeness of mature years. His complexion was fairer than that of those around Him, for they had more of the bronze colour of their nation. He seemed, indeed, even pale, under the white sudar, for the ruddy glow of health usual at His years was wanting. The type of His features was hardly Jewish, but rather as if that and the Greek types blended into a perfect beauty, which, while it awakened reverence, filled the heart, still more, with love. His eyes looked on you with light which seemed broken and softened, as if by passing through tears. He stooped a little, and seemed communing with His own thoughts, and when He moved there was no affectation as with some of the Rabbis, but a natural dignity and grace, like one who feels himself a king, though dressed in lowly robes."

We owe our knowledge of the period immediately following the Temptation to the narrative of the fourth Gospel, written after the others. The splendour of the later ministry in Galilee seems to have overshadowed the humbler beginnings, of the earlier period, in the

other Gospels, so that they are almost passed over by them. Happily, however, John preserves for us, in comparative detail, the incidents of these silent months, in which the public life of Jesus was slowly opening into full flower. How much would have been lost had his record not been given? There is a peculiar charm in the glimpses they supply of the early spring-time of the Saviour's ministry: a tender fragrance all their own.

The first great crisis of His life being over, with its forty days of temptation and proof, its long fasting, its great victory, and its ministrations of angels, Jesus returned to the Jordan, and mingled, unnoticed and unknown, in the crowd round the Baptist. It was apparently the early spring; at least, a fine tradition of the early Church would have it so, perhaps to link together the opening spiritual year with the beauty of the reviving year of nature. He may have held communion once and again with John, but He lived apart from him, silently passing to and fro among the multitudes. Only the day before His arrival, John had renewed his homage to Him in His absence, before a deputation from the ecclesiastical authorities of the Temple, sent to investigate his own teaching and authority. "Was he the Christ? or Elijah? or the expected prophet, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or some other?" The nobly humble man, though at the height of his glory, with the nation looking up to him, in reverence, as a prophet, had no thought of hesitation in his answer. Jesus was unknown, but John yields Him the first place, and proclaims himself unworthy to perform the lowliest offices for One so exalted. "I am only he of whom Isaiah speaks, as a voice crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' I only baptize with water, but there stands among you One whom ye know not—He who is to come after me; I am not worthy to kneel before Him to loose the thong of His sandal." The symbol of servitude and subjection offered by a slave to a new master was to untie his shoe and bind it again, but even this was too great an honour, in John's opinion, to be permitted him to pay to Christ.

He had often borne similar testimony, lifting up his voice and crying aloud, in his addresses to the people, to make known the speedy manifestation of the Great Expected One, but, now, he was able to bear witness to Him in His presence. As he was standing the next day among his followers, Jesus Himself approached, doubtless to speak with him on the affairs of the kingdom of God, in which both were so entirely engrossed. He was still unknown, unrecognized, and unnoticed, and He would not reveal Himself by any act of self-assertion on His own part. But the very end of John's mission from God was that "He should be made manifest to Israel," and the hour had now come to draw aside the veil. Pointing to Him while He was yet at a distance, he proclaims His glory in words which must have thrilled those who heard them: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. This is He of whom I said, 'After

me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' And I knew Him not (as the Messiah); but, that He should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. I have seen the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not (as the Messiah); but He that sent me to baptize with water, the Same said unto me, 'Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, He it is who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God."

It is possible, as Milman suggests, that flocks of lambs, intended for the Temple sacrifices, then passing, from the rich pastures of Perea, to the ford beside which John was baptizing, may have suggested the name "Lamb of God," by which he consecrated to the Church, for ever, that most cherished symbol of the Redeemer. Jesus was meek and gentle like the lamb, but there was much more in the use of such a name by the son of a priest—a Nazarite, and a prophet, like John. The idea of sacrifice was natural and inevitable to him, in connection with it. The nation, indeed, in Christ's day, had so little idea of a suffering and dying Messiah, that Jonathan Ben Uzziel, the contemporary of Christ, while he sees the Messiah in the "Servant of God," of Isaiah's prophecies, ingeniously explains His sufferings as meaning those of Israel. But the number of passages which spoke of the Messiah as suffering, even then arrested attention, and raised the difficulty which the Rabbis of a later day tried to solve, by assuming that there would be two Messiahs—one, the son of Joseph, who should suffer and die; the other, the son of David, who should live and reign. Even then, the Rabbis saw in the words of Zechariah, "They shall look on Him whom they have pierced," and in the words of Isaiah, in his fifty-third chapter, a reference to the Messiah, and, hence, the Jew, in Justin's dialogue, written about a hundred years after Christ, saw nothing surprising in the idea of the Messiah suffering, though he revolted from the thought of His dying in a way cursed by the Law, like crucifixion, a difficulty met with by St. Paul himself.

John, who had studied Isaiah so deeply, and was so penetrated by his spirit, could not have overlooked those verses which speak of the "Servant of God," as "brought like a lamb to the slaughter," and as "bearing the iniquities of many," and "making intercession for the transgressors," nor the words of Zechariah, which even the Rabbis referred to the Messiah. But his language, after the return of Jesus from the wilderness, shows a striking contrast to his previous tone. Before that, he spoke of the Messiah only as having the fan in His hand, and as laying the axe at the root of the tree, and as baptizing with fire as well as the Spirit. Now, he sees in Him only the meek, pure, and patient Lamb, destined by God to sacrifice. That He was to "take away the sin of the world," leaves no question as to the sense in which John saw in Him the "Lamb of God." Isaiah had

painted "the Servant of God" as making peace for the people, by His vicarious sufferings for them, and this "Servant" John sees in Jesus. Fitly typified by "The Lamb," from His gentle patience, He is still more so, as the Antitype of Old Testament sacrifice. To exclude the idea of expiatory suffering, is to trifle with the words of the Baptist, and the ingenious fancy that finds an allusion to the pastoral imagery of the twenty-third Psalm, is even more arbitrary. John saw in Jesus the propitiation, which was, even then, bearing and carrying away the sin of the world.

How was it that John realized so much more clearly than any around him the true ideal of the Messiah, as the sacrificial Lamb, appointed of God, on whom had been laid the sins of a guilty world? It can be explained only by remembering that his very mission was to reveal Him to the world. For this, he tells us, he had been sent, and his commission, therefore, implied a disclosure to him, not only of the person, but the true work of the Messiah. We know that revelation from above pointed out Jesus to him by a heavenly sign, and, from the same source, we may assume, he learned the great truth that, as the Messiah, He would expiate the sin of the world by His sufferings. It may be that Jesus Himself talked with him of "His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." But this, itself, would be a revelation. Only, however, by communication from a higher source, could the idea have been formed of a suffering Messiah—an idea so alien to the conceptions of the day, though dimly realized by individuals, like the aged Simeon, or Zacharias, to whom a prophetic insight had been, for the moment, given. "We have heard out of the Law," said the people to Jesus Himself, "that the Christ abideth for ever"—that is, should never die—"and how sayest Thou, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up?' Who is this Son of Man?" It was in the face of such a universal contrast of thought, that John announced the great truth, with clear and precise distinctness, noting even its having already begun, and its future world-embracing greatness. The more novel the conception of a suffering Messiah to the nation; the more difficult it proved to bring it home even to the disciples themselves; the more it needed to be slowly developed by the facts of Christ's life and death, to secure its being understood; the more justified is the thought of a special revelation, throwing light into the Baptist's soul, on the full meaning of ancient prophecy.

It must not be thought, however, that, with all these heavenly revelations, the knowledge of John was as minute and defined as that of those whose minds the teachings of Jesus afterwards illuminated from above. A generation later, some disciples of John, living at Ephesus, when asked by Paul, "If they had received the Holy Ghost since they believed?" answered that they had not so much as heard of there being any Holy Ghost at all. The Jews of John's day thought of the Holy Spirit only vaguely, as the "Spirit of Jehovah"—the

effluence of the divine power and grace, and we owe it to the Gospels and the Epistles that we now have clearer conceptions.

John had pointed to Jesus as "the Lamb of God," and had thus, doubtless, fixed the attention of those around him on one associated with a symbol so sacred and tender. But he did not confine himself to a title not yet familiar, as addressed to the Messiah, and added one which had already been appropriated to Him in the literature of the nation—"I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." The Sibylline verses, the Book of Enoch, and the Fourth Book of Esdras, had, for generations, applied this title to the expected Messiah, and, thus, there could be no misapprehension in the mind of any who heard it given to Jesus. It was His formal proclamation by the appointed herald.

It seemed as if this wondrous testimony had been lost on those who heard it, but though the multitude took little heed of it, there were some hearts in which it found a worthy response. The next day, as John was standing with two of his disciples, Jesus again passed, and was again proclaimed in the same words. Fixing his eyes earnestly on Him, John called on his companions to "behold the Lamb of God." It was enough. They might not realize the full import of the name, but they felt the divine attractiveness of Him to whom it was given. They were waiting with anxious hearts for the Messiah, and they heard John proclaim that Jesus was He, and, forthwith, left John, to follow Him whom he thus honoured.

Jesus, Himself, now about to begin His public ministry, was ready to receive disciples. He had permanently abandoned His obscure life of Nazareth, and was, henceforth, to be a Rabbi in Israel.

The teachers of the day had round them an inner circle of disciples, able, in some measure, to represent them in public, in their own absence, by speaking in the synagogues, answering questions, or undertaking missionary journeys, and these were to be the special duties of the disciples of Jesus. They were to be trained by Him in the mysteries of the Kingdom, as those of the Rabbis were in the mysteries of the Law. No teacher assumed his office in Israel without a group of such followers round him, for it was reckoned a grave sin for a Rabbi to be at any time without some one to instruct in the Law, and even their scholars were required to converse habitually on this one study of their lives. "When two scholars of the wise," says the Talmud, "are making a journey together, and do not make the Law the subject of their conversation, they deserve to be burned alive, as is written in 2 Kings ii. 11." It was, therefore, only an adoption of the custom of the day which Jesus now followed.

The two who now joined Him seem to have hitherto formed part of such an inner circle round John, and were the beginning of a group of trusted friends, with whom He could associate, and of assistants in His great work, while, also, a centre round which others might gather. He drew them to Him, however, in a way new and

significant, for He did not wait till they asked leave to follow Him, and did not court their aid, but called on them to follow Him, retaining, thus, a relation of superiority even in this detail.

He could, hence, more freely admit them to the most endearing and familiar intimacy; and speak of them, before long, as His friends, His brethren, and even His children and little ones, though, also, His servants. He had chosen them, not they Him; and thus He could the better train them to be teachers in His own society, alluring the world to it by the example of their lives, or spreading it by their ministrations. Standing towards them in a relation so dignified, they were at once His friends, and the servants whom He could employ as diligent fishers of men, and labourers in the great vineyard of the kingdom of God.

Though, like the Rabbis, a teacher of the nation, in the streets, in the houses, and in the synagogues, as the custom of the day required, Jesus did not try to gain His immediate followers from their order, or from their disciples, for He had little sympathy with them. He rather sought simple children of the people, free, as far as possible, from prejudice and self-sufficiency, and marked only by their sincerity, humility, intellectual shrewdness, and religious sensibility. The less they knew of the schools, the less they would have to unlearn; the more they derived from Him, the more undoubting their loyalty to Him. He found the class He wanted, mostly in lowly fishermen and countrymen.

Of the first two disciples, the one was Andrew, a fisherman, from Bethsaida on the Lake of Galilee; the other, doubtless, was John himself, a native of the same town—though, with his wonted modesty, he withholds his name. No wonder he remembered every incident of his introduction to Christ, so minutely, after many years, for it was the birth-hour of his religious life. Very probably the proposal to join the new teacher came from him, and, if so, he was the first to follow Jesus, as he was the last to leave Him. The two had heard Him announced as the Lamb of God, and as such they sought Him. Can we wonder that the name became such a favourite with him, who, hereafter, was the beloved disciple, that we find it in his writings alone, or that he repeats it in the Apocalypse more than thirty times?

The two followed Jesus, anxious to speak to Him, but in modest difficulty how to approach Him. Their embarrassment, however, was brief, for Jesus, hearing their footsteps behind Him, and judging, with the quick instinct of sympathy, that He was being sought for the first time, turned and spoke to them. Asking them what they seek, He is answered in their confusion, by the counter-question,—"Rabbi, where dwellest Thou?" The multitudes attending such gatherings as John's preaching, were wont to run up temporary booths of wattled boughs, with a striped abba, or outer cloak, thrown over, for cover, and some one had given Jesus a share in such a shelter, for it is not likely that there were houses near. Rabbis on

their journeys were always welcome to hospitality, and He was regarded as one, by at least a few, already. The title had been given even to John, as it now was to Jesus, for although the authorities at Jerusalem discountenanced those who had not studied in the schools, and the people half distrusted any teaching which did not address them on school authority, the recognition was never withheld where evident knowledge of the Law, or worthiness to teach, was seen. Jewish traders and Galilæan teachers, who had no diploma from the schools of Jerusalem, were accepted as Rabbis in Rome; and in Palestine, the dignity and wisdom of Jesus drew forth towards Him the title of Rabbi and Teacher, not only from the people and the disciples, but even from the Pharisees and Rabbis themselves.

The simple words of invitation, "Come and see," were enough to open the relationship between Jesus and hearts so eager to know more of Him, and, presently, they were with Him, where He dwelt. The day passed quickly, for they did not mark the hours, as they stretched on from noon, when they had come, till towards night. His discourse, His teaching, and His whole Being, excluded all other thoughts. If any doubt respecting Him had remained, it soon passed away. Both were, henceforth, His followers, and both equally recognized in Him the promised Messiah. The night approached, but neither was willing to leave. They had found rest to their souls. All day long, and into the quiet watches of the night, they had listened to His first opening of His great message of mercy from the Father, and they would fain hear still more. But, as Jeremy Taylor puts it—"in accidents of the greatest pleasure, our joys cannot be contained within the limits of the possessor's thoughts." Andrew had a brother, Simon, and longed to bring him to Jesus. Retiring, therefore, for a time, he soon returned with him in company. It was a matter of the gravest moment, on the one side, that a right choice of disciples should be made, and it was no less momentous on the other, that there should be no self-deception; but on neither side was there long hesitation, or cautious inquiry, or demand for evidence of character, or crafty wariness. Everything was simple and direct, in all the fulness of mutual confidence and trust. To see Jesus, and hear Him speak, was enough, and He, on His part, "needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man." Looking steadfastly at Simon, He saw in him, as in John and Andrew, the characteristics He required in His followers. The rare unbending firmness of purpose, the tenacious fidelity, the swift decisiveness, the Galilæan fire and manliness, and the tender religiousness of spirit, which marked him to the end of his life, were read at once. Jesus had found in him His firmest, most rock-like servant and confessor; the man who, from this first moment—except for one sad instant—amidst all changes and trials, and the ever-growing storms of the world, would never be untrue to Him. "Thou art Simon," said He, "the son of Jonas. Henceforth thou shalt be called 'The Rock.'" No

wonder that he is best known as Cephas, or Peter, the Aramaic and Greek equivalents of this honourable distinction. The Christian Church was already founded in these three disciples.

With the fine modesty of his nature, John says nothing of himself in relation to a day so eventful in his history. The kingly soul of Jesus evidently enchained him at once. Henceforth, he was altogether His, though, for a time, dismissed to his home. But, once more permitted to follow Him, he is ever found at His side, forgetting himself in his love for his Master, and lost in the contemplation of His life and words. We do not know the stages by which, from this moment, onwards, his faith in the Saviour grew, till it reached that blending of soul with soul, in inmost love, which made him, to the end of his long life, the ideal disciple. Writing last of all, he allows himself to be seen only twice in the story of his Master—now, when he came with Andrew, as the first to join Christ, and at the close, on Calvary, when he lifts the veil for a moment from the unique relation in which he stood to his Lord.

The earliest traditions join his brother James with John, as one of the very first disciples, for though John, from the same delicacy as shrank from speaking of himself, does not mention his brother's name, the other three Gospels always number him with the earliest adherents of Jesus. There can be little question that, as Andrew went to seek his brother Simon, John, also, brought James to Jesus. The intimation that Andrew went first on his errand of love, seems to leave us to infer that he himself went next.

The four disciples had it in common that they belonged to the same town, Bethsaida, that they were of the fisher population, and that both families were in a comparatively prosperous position. We know nothing of the father of Andrew and Simon, but James and John were the sons of one Zabdai, and we know, from comparison of texts, that their mother was Salome, so honourably mentioned in the Gospels. Writers so acute as Ewald have seen in her a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and, if so, John and James were cousins of their Master. If it be correct to honour Salome thus, she was present with Mary at the crucifixion. In any case, she belonged to the number of pious souls ready to accept a Messiah such as Jesus, and hence her sons must have received the priceless blessing of a godly training and example. It seems as if we could almost trace the beloved disciple in the character of a mother, who "ministered to Jesus of her substance" while He lived, and did not forsake Him even when He hung on the cross.

To begin His public career in a way so humble and unostentatious, was in strict keeping with the work and character of Christ. It was easier for Him to train a few, and gradually raise them to the high standard required in His immediate followers. That His first adherents were attracted only by religious considerations, tended to guard against any seeking to join Him who were not moved to do so by a

true spiritual sympathy—itself the pledge of their fitness for disciples. To have drawn around Him great multitudes, by a display of supernatural powers, would have destroyed all His plans, for He could have found no such sympathy in crowds thus gathered. Having, therefore, begun with the lowly band of four, He turned His thoughts once more towards home, and set out, with them, to Galilee, next day. A fifth disciple joined Him on the homeward journey—Philip, a townsman of the others. Nothing is told of the circumstances, though there can be no doubt that he had heard of Jesus, either from the Baptist, to whom, like the others, he seems to have gone out; or from the four, as they travelled with him on his own return. The simple words "Follow me," so often uttered afterwards, were enough to add him to the others.

The family of Mary, in which we no longer hear any mention of Joseph—now, apparently, dead for a number of years—seem at this time to have left Nazareth for a short sojourn at Cana, a village a few miles directly north of their own town, on the other side of the hills behind it. A little later, Capernaum was chosen instead, but it was to Cana, not Nazareth, that Jesus returned from the Jordan. It lay upon an almost isolated hill, rising proudly above the pasture-land of the little valley of El Battauf, and was afterwards a place of some importance, in the last Jewish war, from its strong position.

Jesus and His companions had scarcely reached it, before Philip, full of natural joy at his discovery of the Messiah, in Jesus, sought out a friend who lived in Cana, Nathanael by name, to let him know that he had found Him "of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph." Nazareth was only a few miles off, but so privately had Jesus lived in it that the name was new to Nathanael, and the town, besides, had a questionable name. "Can any good thing," asked he, "come out of Nazareth?"

Jesus had won Peter by the greeting which had made him feel, that, by a knowledge beyond human, He had already fixed His eye on him, before His coming, as a future disciple. A similar display of superhuman knowledge now kindled faith in Nathanael. As he approached, Jesus greeted him as "an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile." A glance had been enough to show that he was one whose simplicity and uprightness of spirit marked him as a member of the true Israel of God. Nathanael felt that he was known, but wondered how Jesus could have learned about him. A few words more, and he was won for ever. He had been sitting alone, under the fig-tree before his house, or in his garden, hidden, as he thought, from all, when Philip spoke to him. "Before that Philip called thee," said Jesus, "when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee." The first words had struck him, but these, recalling the moments just gone, when, very likely, in his fancied seclusion, he had been pondering the misery of Israel, and longing for the Great Deliverer,—showed that his inmost soul had been, all the while, open to the eye of Jesus.

and completed the conquest of his soul. "Rabbi," said he, "Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." He felt that the heart of the Messiah of God had turned tenderly towards him, even before they had met.

The simple, prompt faith of Nathanael was no less pleasing to Jesus than honouring to himself. There was something so fresh, so fervent, so full-hearted in the words, now at the very beginning of Christ's public work, that they won a reply alike gracious and sublime. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these." Far higher grounds of faith would, henceforth, be granted, for, from this time, "the heavens would be seen, as it were, open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man,"—the name consecrated to the Messiah from the days of Daniel—and now permanently chosen as His own. When He begins His work in its full activity, there will be no longer a momentary opening of heaven, as lately on the Jordan, but a constant intercourse between it and earth, as of old in the vision of Jacob; heavenly ministrations bringing countless blessings down, and bearing back the tidings of the work of mercy, in reconciling man to God. Language like this is, of course, metaphorical. It may be understood literally, in one or two cases, in the Saviour's history, but He cannot have referred to these. He, rather, spoke of the connection between earth and heaven, which He had opened. They would be no longer isolated from each other. Intercourse between them was henceforth renewed, never again to cease; intercourse, at first, between Him and His Father, but gradually spreading over the earth, as men caught His image, and reproduced His spirit. The angels descending from heaven with gifts for the Son of Man to dispense to His brethren, would be visible to all who saw the results, in His kingdom over the earth.

Nathanael's name does not occur in the list of the apostles, but it has been assumed from the earliest times that he was Bartholomew, who is always named next to Philip. It was a Jewish custom to change the name when a public profession of religion was made. "Four things," says R. Isaac, "have power to change a man's destiny—alms, prayer, change of heart, and change of name." We have instances of such change of name in Simon, who is also indifferently mentioned as Peter, and as the son of Jonas, and in Barnabas, whose proper name was Joses. Nathanael may have been the personal name, while Bartholomew was simply an allusion to him as the son of Talmai.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE OPENING OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

THE plain of El Battauf, on a hill in which rose the village of Cana, now utterly forsaken, stretches out in a pleasant rolling green sea, embayed in a framework of softer or steeper hills. On the south, the whitewashed tomb of a Mohammedan saint marks the top of the hill behind Nazareth, and a little to the west of this, the ruined tower of Sepphoris rises from a lower ridge. Entering the plain from the north, the first village is Kefr Menda, with its deep spring, the water of which is carefully kept for use in the hot summer; rain water, collected in an open pool, being used at other times. The flat roofs of many of the poor cottages show frail shelters of wattled wands and twigs, the sleeping places of the inmates below, in the sultry summer nights. They are, doubtless, the counterparts of the booths of branches of olives, pines, myrtles, palms, and other trees, which the ancient Jews, in Nehemiah's day, made on their house-roofs in Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The plain undulates in alternate grass and grain fields, between two and three miles, from Kefr Menda to Sefuriyeh, the ancient capital of Galilee, the "bird-like" Sepphoris. Several broad caravan roads, which lead to the fords of the Jordan, cross it; groves of figs and olives fringe the southern edge, and parts of the slopes, of the hill on which Sefuriyeh stands. One overtakes asses bearing heavy loads of rich grass to the village, some of them, perhaps, with an ear cropped off; the penalty allowed to be inflicted by any peasant who has caught it feeding in his unprotected patch of grain. Sefuriyeh is, even still, a large and prosperous village, stretching out on the western and southern slopes of its hill. A half-fallen tower, of great antiquity, crowns the height, and from its top the eye ranges over a pleasant landscape—the soft green plain, the fig and olive groves fringing it, Kefr Menda to the north, Cana of Galilee a little further east, and, to the south-east, the white tomb on the hill of Nazareth; a southern sky, with its deep blue, overarching all. It is a delightful idyllic picture, on the small scale that marks everything in Palestine.

Cana—the reedy place—as, no doubt, the first settlers found the plain below it, before it was drained and cultivated, is now so utterly desolate that it is the favourite hunting ground of the neighbourhood, even leopards being shot at times among its broken houses, while the wild boar and the jackal find haunts in the thick jungle of oak coppice, on the slopes of the wadys around. The houses are built of limestone, and some of them may have been inhabited within the last fifty years. Sepp found the whole space on which the village

seemed to have stood, only about a hundred paces, each way. "I met," says he, "not a living soul; not even a dog: the watchman one never misses in Palestine was not there to give a sound. My step echoed through the deserted little street and open square, as if in the dead of night; only flies held their marriage rejoicings in the sunshine; while a splendid rainbow stretched over the ruined tower of Sepphoris."

It was very different in the days when Jesus came to it from His visit to the preaching of John, on the Jordan. A marriage was afoot in the circle of Mary's friends; possibly of her connections. That Mary and Jesus were invited to the usual rejoicings, and that they accepted the invitation, marks the worth of those who had given it, for the presence of the saintly mother and her Son at such a time, are a pledge that all that was innocent and beautiful characterized the festivities.

A marriage in the East has always been a time of great rejoicing. The bridegroom, adorned and anointed, and attended by his groomsmen, "the sons of the bridechamber," went, of old, as now, on the marriage day, to the house of the bride, who awaited him, veiled from head to foot, alike from Eastern ideas of propriety, and as a symbol of her subjection as a wife. A peculiar girdle—the "attire" which a bride could not forget—was always part of her dress, and a wreath of myrtle leaves, either real, or of gold, or gilded work—like our wreath of orange blossoms—was so indispensable that it came to be used as a term for the bride herself. Her hair, if she had not been married before, was left flowing; her whole dress was perfumed, and she glittered with as many jewels as the family boasted, or, if poor, could borrow for the occasion. Her bridal dress, her special ornaments, the ointment and perfumes for her person, and presents of fruit and other things, had been sent in the earlier part of the day by the bridegroom; the bride, on her part, sending him, as her prescribed gift, a shroud, which he kept and wore, as she did hers, on each New Year's Day and Day of Atonement. The Rabbis had fixed Wednesday as the day on which maidens should be married, and Friday for widows, so that, if the bride at Cana was now married for the first time, we know the day of the week on which the ceremony took place. She might be very young, for girls become wives in the East when twelve or fourteen, or even younger. The bridegroom and bride both fasted all day before the marriage, and confessed their sins in prayer, as on the Day of Atonement. When the bride reached the house of her future husband's father, in which the marriage was celebrated, the bridegroom received her, still deeply veiled, and conducted her within, with great rejoicings. Indeed, he generally set out from his father's house in the evening to meet her, with flute-players or singers before him; his groomsmen, and others, with flaring torches or lamps, escorting him amidst loud rejoicing, which rose still higher as he led her back. Neighbours thronged

into the streets. Flutes and drums and shrill cries filled the air, and the procession was swelled as it passed on, by a train of maidens, friends of the bride and bridegroom, who had been waiting for it. The Talmud has preserved a snatch of one of the songs sung by the bridesmaids and girls as they danced before the bride, on the way to the bridegroom's house. In a free translation it runs something like this:—

> "Her eyelids are not stained with blue,
> Her red cheeks are her own;
> Her hair hangs waving as it grew,
> Her grace were wealth, alone!"

In the house of the bridegroom's father, which was, for a time, the home of the young couple, things went merrily, for a feast was provided, to which all the friends and neighbours were invited. It was an essential part of the ceremony, for even so early as Jacob's day, "to make a feast" had become the common expression for the celebration of a marriage.

The bride did not sit at this feast, however, but remained apart, among the women, shrouded in the long white veil of betrothal; unseen, as yet, even by her husband. Nor did she take any part in the festivities, or appear at all. It was only when husband and wife were finally alone, that the veil was, for the first time, removed.

Meanwhile, the family rejoicings went on apace. The feast was provided at the cost of the bridegroom, and continued, usually, for seven days, with the greatest mirth. The bridegroom wore a crown, often of flowers—the crown with which, in the Song of Solomon, it is said, "his mother crowned him in the day of his espousals, in the day of the gladness of his heart,"—and sat "decked, like a priest, in his ornaments;" the bride sitting apart among the women, "adorned with her jewels." Singing, music, and dancing, merry riddles, and the play of wit, amused the house, night after night, while the feast was prolonged, and it was only after it had worn itself out, that life settled down again into colourless monotony.

It was to some such festivity that Jesus had been invited with His five disciples. The earthen floor and the ledge round the wall would be spread with carpets, the walls hung with garlands; the spirits of all bright and cheerful as the decorated chamber, and the modest rejoicings in no way clouded by the presence of Mary's Son and His followers. There was no excess, we may be sure, but the flow of harmless entertainment brightened all faces. John had been an ascetic—the highest form of religious life hitherto known in Israel. He had spent his days in penitential austerity and wilderness seclusion; had drunk no wine, had eaten no pleasant food, and had kept apart from human affairs and relationships. But a new and higher ideal of religion was now to be introduced. Jesus came to spiritualize the humblest duties of life, and sanctify its simplest incidents, so as to ennoble it as a whole. Henceforth, pleasures and enjoy-

ments were not to be shunned as unholy; religion was not to thrive on the mortification of every human instinct, and the repression of every cheerful emotion. It would mix with the crowd of men, affect no singularity, take part in the innocent festivities of life, interest itself in all that interested men at large, and yet, amidst all, remain consecrated and pure; *in* the world, by sympathy and active brotherhood, but not *of* it; human in its outward form, but heavenly in its elevation and spirit.

The rejoicings had continued for some evenings, when a misfortune happened that threatened to disgrace the bridegroom and his family for life in the eyes of their neighbours. The supply of wine ran out. As in all wine-growing countries, the population were not only temperate, but simple in their whole living, beyond what the natives of a colder climate can imagine. Yet wine was their symbol of joy and festivity. Jotham, in the far-back days of the Judges, had praised it as "cheering God and man," and among other passages, a Psalm had spoken of it as making glad the heart, though its immoderate use had been condemned in many Scriptures. "Wine is the best of all medicines," said a Hebrew proverb: "where wine is wanting, doctors thrive." "May there be always wine and life in the mouth of the Rabbi," was one of the toasts at their festivities. But, withal, this referred only to its moderate use. Among the parables in which the people delighted, one ran thus—"When Noah planted his vineyard, Satan came and asked him what he was doing? 'Planting a vineyard,' was the reply. 'What is it for?' 'Its fruits, green or dry, are sweet and pleasant: we make wine of it, which gladdens the heart.' 'I should like to have a hand in the planting,' said Satan. 'Good,' replied Noah. Satan then brought a lamb, a lion, a sow, and an ape, killed them in the vineyard, and let their blood run into the roots of the vines. From this it comes that a man, before he has taken wine, is simple as a lamb, which knows nothing, and is dumb before its shearers; when he has drunk moderately, he grows a lion, and thinks there is not his like; if he drink too much, he turns a swine, and wallows in the mire; if he drink still more, he becomes a filthy ape, falling hither and thither, and knowing nothing of what he does.

The good and the evil of wine were thus familiar, but we may be certain that only its better side, as enjoyed among a people at once simple and sober, who held excess in abhorrence, and in a household where license was not to be thought of—was seen at the marriage in Cana, and this temperate use of it Jesus cheerfully sanctioned. Mary, with her gentle womanly feeling for the shame of seeming inhospitality that threatened the host, indulged the hope that He whose mysterious birth, honoured by a special star, and the songs of angels, and whose changed look and bearing, since His Jordan visit, could not have escaped her, would now put forth the hidden powers she might well believe Him to have, to brighten the family circle, in whose life

this feast was so great an event. She had, however, to learn, by a gentle rebuke, that His human relation to her was now merged and lost in a higher. Using an every-day form of words, of immemorial age in the nation, with a look of love and tenderness, He waived her implied solicitation aside—"Woman, what is there to me and thee? Mine hour is not yet come." There was no disrespect in the word "woman," for He used it afterwards to her, when on the cross, in His last tender offices of love. It was as if He had said, "Our spheres lie apart. Hitherto you have known me as your Son. Henceforth, I am much more. My divine powers are only for divine ends: at the call of my Father alone, for His glory only. He fixes my hour for all the works He wills me to do, and in this case it has not yet come." "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," said Mary, on hearing His answer—for it had no harshness to her.

The superstitious dread of ceremonial uncleanness, among the Jews, made ample provision necessary in every household, for constant washings of vessels, or of the person. No one ate without washing the hands; each guest had his feet washed on his arrival, for sandals were left outside and only naked feet allowed to touch a host's floor; and the washing of "cups, and jugs, and bottles," as the Talmud tells us, "went on the whole day." Six great jars of stone, therefore, for such purifications, stood ranged outside the door, or in the chamber; their narrow mouths likely filled with green leaves, as is still the custom, to keep the water cool. "Fill the water pots with water," said Jesus, adding, when they had carefully filled them to the brim, "Draw out, and take supplies to the governor of the feast." But the water was now glowing wine. His words to His mother and the servants had been unnoticed by the company, and the fresh supply, when tasted first, as the fashion was, by the chief man of the feast, on whom it fell to see to the entertainment of the guests, was found so good, that he goodhumouredly rallied the bridegroom on keeping the best to the last.

The "glory" of Jesus had always shone, to those who had eyes to see it, in the spotless beauty of His life, but this was a revelation of it in a new form. It was the "beginning" of His miracles, wrought, as was fitting, in stillness and privacy, without display,—to cheer and brighten those around Him. His presence at such a feast showed His sympathy with human joys, human connections, and human relationships. He taught by it, for the first time, that common life in all its phases, may be raised to a religious dignity, and that the loving smile of God, like the tender blue above, looks down on the whole round of existence. He had not been invited as the chief guest, or as in any way distinguished, for He was not yet The Teacher, famed throughout the land, nor had His miracles begun to reveal His higher claims. But He took the place assigned Him as one among the many, as naturally as the lowliest of the company, and remained unknown till His divine glory revealed Him.

His miraculous power, indeed, was only one aspect of this "glory." In a far higher sense it was "manifested" in His Person. It was, doubtless, amazing to possess such powers, but, that One whose word, or mere will, could command the obedience of nature, should mingle as a friend in an humble marriage festivity, a man amongst men, was still more wonderful. Nothing could better illustrate His perfect manhood, than His identifying Himself thus with the humble incidents of a private circle. He had grown up under the common ordinances of human existence, as a child, a son, a brother, a friend, and a neighbour. As a Jew, He had shared in the social, civil, and religious life of His nation. His presence at this marriage, showed that He continued the same familiar relations to His fellow-men, after His consecration as before it. Neither His nationality, nor education, nor mental characteristics, nor natural temperament, narrowed His sympathies. Though burdened with the high commission of the Messiah, He retained a vivid interest in all things human. With us, any supreme pre-occupation leaves only apathy for other things. But in Christ, no one faculty or emotion appeared in excess. His fulness of nature suited itself to every occasion. Strength and grace, wisdom and love, courage and purity, which are the one side of our being, were never displayed so harmoniously, and so perfectly, as in Him, but the incidents of this marriage feast show that the other side, the feminine gentleness and purity, which are the ideal virtues of woman, were no less His characteristics. They throw light on the words of St. Paul, "In Him is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female." He could subdue Pilate by His calm dignity, but He also ministered to the happiness of a village festival. He could withstand the struggle with the Prince of Darkness in the wilderness, and through life, but He wept over the grave of Lazarus. He could let the rich young ruler go his way to perish, if he would, but He sighed as He healed the man that was dumb. He pronounced the doom of Jerusalem, with a lofty sternness, but He wept as He thought how it had neglected the things of its peace. He craved sympathy, and He showed it with equal tenderness: He was calm amidst the wildest popular tumult, but He sought the lonely mountain for midnight prayer. He sternly rebuked Peter for hinting a temptation, but He blamed His sleep in Gethsemane on the weakness of the flesh. He gave away a crown when on the cross, but He was exceedingly sorrowful unto death in the garden. He never used His miraculous powers to relieve Himself; but He provided for the multitude in the wilderness. His judges quailed before Him, but He forgot His dying agonies, to commend His mother to the lifelong care of a friend. He rebuked death, that He might give her son back to the widow; and He took part in the rejoicings of an humble marriage, that He might elevate and sanctify human joys. In the fullest sense He was a man, but not in the sense in which manly virtues are opposed to those of woman, for He showed no less the gentleness, purity, and tenderness

of the one sex, than the strength and nobility of the other. He was the Son of Man, in the grand sense of being representative of humanity as a whole. Man and woman, alike, have in Him their perfect ideal.

An Indian apologue tells us that a Brahmin, one of whose disciples had been perplexed respecting miracles, ordered a flower-pot filled with earth to be brought him, and having put a seed into it before the doubter, caused it to spring up, blossom, and bear fruit, while he still stood by. "A miracle," cried the young man. "Son," replied the Brahmin, "what else do you see done here in an hour than nature does more slowly round the year?" The wine which the guests had drunk from the bridegroom's bounty, and possibly from the added gifts of friends, had been slowly matured from the vine by mysterious elaboration, from light, and heat, and moisture, and the salts of the earth, none of which had more apparent affinity to it than the water which Jesus transformed The miracle in nature was not less real or wonderful than that of the marriage feast, and strikes us less, only by its being familiar. At the threshold of Christ's miraculous works it is well to realize a fact so easily overlooked. A miracle is only an exercise, in a new way, of the Almighty power we see daily producing perhaps the same results in nature. Infinitely varied forces are at work around us every moment. From the sun to the atom, from the stone to the thinking brain and beating heart, they circulate sleeplessly, through all things, for ever. As they act and react on each other, the amazing result is produced which we know as nature, but how many mysterious inter-relations, of which we know nothing, may offer endlessly varied means for producing specific ends, at the command of God? Nor is there anything more amazing in the works of Christ than in the daily phenomena of nature. The vast universe, embracing heavens above heavens, stretching out into the Infinite—with constellations anchored on the vast expanse like tiny islet clusters on the boundless ocean, is one great miracle. It was wonderful to create, but to sustain creation is, itself, to create anew, each moment. Suns and planets, living creatures in their endless races, all that the round sky of each planet covers—seas, air, sweeping valleys, lofty mountains, and the million wonders of the brain and heart, and life, of their innumerable populations, have no security, each moment, that they shall commence another, except in the continued expenditure of fresh creative energy. Miracles are only the momentary intercalation of unsuspected laws which startle by their novelty, but are no more miraculous than the most common incident of the great mystery of nature.

The beginning of the public career of Jesus as Messiah at a time so joyful as a household festival was appropriate. His bounteous gift fitly marked the opening of His kingly work, like the fountains flowing with wine at the coronation of earthly kings. But a king very different from earthly monarchs was now entering on His reign. No outward preparation is made: He has no worldly wealth or rich

provision to lavish away. Yet, though He has no wine, water itself, at His word, becomes wine, rich as the finest vintage. Till His hour has come, He remains passive and self-restrained, awaiting the moment divinely appointed for His glory shining out among men. Once come, the slumbering power, till now unrevealed, breaks forth, never to cease its gracious work of blessing and healing, till the kingdom He came to found is triumphant in His death.

The age of Jesus at His entrance on His public work has been very variously estimated. Ewald supposes that He was about thirty-four, fixing His birth three years before the death of Herod. Wieseler, on the contrary, supposes Him to have been in His thirty-first year, setting His birth a few months before Herod's death. Bunsen, Anger, Winer, Schürer, and Renan agree with this: Lichtenstein makes Him thirty-two. Hausrath and Keim, on the other hand, think that He began His ministry in the year A.D. 34, but they do not give any supposed date for His birth, though if that of Ewald be taken as a medium, He must now have been forty years old, while, if Wieseler's date be preferred, He would only have been thirty-seven. The statement of the Gospel, that He was "*about* thirty years of age when He began" His public work, is so indefinite as to allow free conjecture. In any case, He must have been thirty-one at His baptism, from His having been born before Herod's death. It was even supposed by Irenæus, from the saying of the Jews,—"Thou art not yet fifty years old," and from His allusion to the forty-six years during which the Temple had been building, that He was between forty and fifty at His death. Amidst such difference, exactness is impossible, and it seems safest to keep to the generality of St. Luke, by thinking of Jesus as *about* thirty—though not younger—at His baptism.

The stay at Cana seems to have been short. It may have been only a family visit, or it may have been, that, from some cause, Mary had gone for a time to live there; but, in either case, Jesus very soon removed from a locality so little suited to His work, from its isolation, and remoteness from the centres of life and population. He had resolved to make Galilee, in which He was at home, the chief scene of His labours. He was, moreover, safer there than either in Judea or Perea, for the hierarchy could reach Him more easily in the one, and the tyranny of Antipas was less restrained in the wild territory of the other. The kingdom He came to set up must grow silently, and by slow, peaceful degrees, like the mustard seed, to which he compared it, and it could not do so in any part so well as in Galilee. Far away from turbulent Judea, He escaped the excitements, more or less political, the insurrections, and wild dreams of national supremacy, ever fermenting at Jerusalem, and avoided exciting suspicion, or having His spiritual aims perverted by the revolutionary violence of the masses. His kingdom was not of this world, like the Messianic dominion fondly expected by the nation, but the far mightier reign of "The Truth."

Galilee was, however, in some respects, an unfavourable centre. The morose and self-sufficient Jerusalemites ridiculed its population, and affected to think that no prophet had risen in it, though Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, and Nahum,—the first, the greatest of the prophets,—had been Galilæans. The wits of the capital, moreover, ridiculed them for their speech, for they substituted one letter for another, and had a broad pronunciation. Their culture, and even their capacity were contemned, though so many prophets had risen amongst them, though they could boast of Barak, the conqueror of the Canaanites, and of many famous Rabbis, and though the high-minded Judas, the Zealot, had shed honour on them, in Christ's own day, as the great apostle Paul, sprung from a Gischala family, was to do hereafter. But hatred, or jealousy, like love, is blind.

It is hard to know how early the Rabbinical fancy of two Messiahs arose, but, if it had already taken any shape in Christ's lifetime, it must rather have hindered than helped His great work. The Messiah of the House of Joseph was to appear in Galilee, and, after gathering round him the long-lost ten tribes, was to march, at their head, to Jerusalem, to receive the submission of the Messiah of the House of David, and, having united the whole kingdom once more, was to die by the hands of Gog and Magog, the northern heathen, as a sacrifice for the sins of Jeroboam, and of the nation at large. But these fancies took a definite form only in a later age, and we find no trace of them in the New Testament. Who can tell, however, how old their germs may have been? They show, at least, what the application of passages from the prophets to Christ's first appearing in Galilee also implies, that the Galilæans cherished the great promise of the Messiah. Frank, high-spirited, and comparatively unprejudiced, they were more ready than other Jews to listen to a new teacher, and the thousands who had rekindled their zeal on the banks of the Jordan, under the preaching of John, had already on their return, spread around them the excited expectation of an immediate advent of the Messiah, which the Baptist had announced. But though the soil was thus specially favourable for His earlier work, the fame of Jesus was hereafter to spread, in spite of all local prejudices, till, at last, He should hear Himself proclaimed by the multitude, even in the streets of Jerusalem, as Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

Nazareth, itself, like Cana, lay too far from the centres of population for Christ's great work, and there was, besides, the inevitable drawback of its having known Him during the long years of His humble privacy. He, doubtless, felt, from the first, what He afterwards expressed with so much feeling, that "a prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house." His fellow townsmen, and even His own family, could not realize that one whose lowly position and unmarked career, they had had before them through life, could be so much above them. It was, in infinitely greater degree, the same pettiness, and inability to estimate the

familiar justly, that, in our own age, made John Wilson write, that as "the northern Highlanders do not admire 'Waverley,' so, I presume, the south Highlanders despise 'Guy Mannering.' The Westmoreland peasants think Wordsworth a fool. In Borrowdale, Southey is not known to exist. I met ten men in Hawick who do not think Hogg a poet, and the whole city of Glasgow think me a madman." With such counteracting prejudices, Nazareth was altogether unsuited for the longer residence of Jesus, and hence He seems never to have returned to it, after His baptism, except for a passing visit.

He chose for His future home the shores of the Lake of Galilee, at that time the most populous, as they are still the most delightful, part of Palestine. Henceforth, the "jewel" of its banks—Capernaum—became "His own city," and for a time, at least, His mother and His "brethren" seem also to have made it their home, though a little later, we find Jesus living permanently as a guest in the house of Peter, as if they had once more left it, and returned to Nazareth. From this centre His future work was carried on. From it He set out on His missionary journeys, and He returned to it from them to find a welcome and a home.

Capernaum lay on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee, at the spot, a little way from the head of the Lake, where the shore recedes in a more westerly arc, forming a small cape, from which the view embraces the whole coast, in every direction. It could never have been very large, for Josephus only once mentions it, as a village to which he was carried by his soldiers, when hurt by a fall from his horse, which had stuck in the marsh at the head of the Lake. The name does not occur in the Old Testament. Capernaum, was the boundary town between the territory of Philip and Antipas, and, as such, had a custom-house and a garrison. One of the officers stationed for a time in it, a foreigner, and, doubtless, a proselyte, had, in Christ's day, built a fine synagogue, as a mark, at once of his friendly feeling to the Jewish nation, and of homage to Jehovah. The whitewashed houses were built of black basalt or lava, which still lies in boulders, here and there, over the neighbourhood, and gives the ground a dark appearance when the tall spring grass has withered and left it bare. The synagogue, however, was of white limestone. Great blocks of chiselled stone, finely carved, once its frieze, architrave, and cornices, still lie among the waving thistles, where the town once stood. The walls are now nearly level with the surface, most of the pillars and stones having been carried off to build into house walls, or burn for lime, though some of its once double row of columns, hewn in one block, and of their Corinthian capitals, and massy pedestals, still speak of its former splendour. Round the synagogue, and stretching up the gentle slope behind, stretched the streets and squares, covering an area of half-a-mile in length, and a quarter in breadth, the main street running north, to the neighbouring Chorazin.

At the north end of the town, two tombs yet remain; one built of limestone, underground, in an excavation hollowed out with great labour in the hard basalt; the other, a rectangular building, above ground, large enough to hold a great number of bodies, and once, apparently, whitewashed, to warn passers by not to defile themselves by too near an approach to the dead.

Capernaum, in Christ's day, was a thriving, busy town. The "highway to the Sea," from Damascus to Ptolemais,—now Acre, but still known by the former name, in the seventeenth century,—ran through it, bringing no little local traffic, and also opening the markets of the coast to the rich yield of the neighbouring farms, orchards, and vineyards, and the abundant returns of the fisheries of the Lake. The townsfolk, thus, as a rule, enjoyed the comfort and plenty we see in the houses of Peter and Matthew, and were even open to the charge of being "winebibbers and gluttonous," which implied generous entertainment. They were proud of their town, and counted on its steady growth and unbounded prosperity, little dreaming of the ruin which would one day make even its site a question.

It was in this town that Jesus settled, amidst a mixed population of fisher-people, grain and fruit agents, local tradesmen, and the many classes and occupations of a thriving station on a great line of caravan traffic. It was a point that brought Him in contact with Gentile as well as Jewish life. Households like that of Peter, proselytes like the centurion, and the need of a large synagogue, imply a healthy religiousness in not a few, but the woe pronounced on the town by Jesus, after a time, shows that whatever influence He may have had on a circle, the citizens as a whole were too much engrossed with their daily affairs to pay much heed to Him.

An hour's walk behind the town leads to gentle hill slopes, which, in April, are thinly covered with crisp grasses, and stalks of weeds. From their top, the eye follows the course of the Jordan as it enters the Lake in two streams, through a marshy delta, the favourite pasture ground for herds of huge, ungainly, fierce, and often dangerous black buffaloes, which delight to wallow by day in such marshy places, up to the neck in water or mud, and return at night to their masters, the Arabs of the Jordan valley. Jesus must often have seen these herds luxuriating idly in this swampy paradise, for they are not used for labour in the district round the Lake, though they are sometimes set to drag the plough in the parts near the Waters of Merom. The Lake itself, stretched out, north and south, like a pear in shape, the broad end towards the north; or like a lyre, from which, indeed, it got its ancient name of Chinneroth. Its greatest width, from the ancient Magdala on the west side, to Gergesa on the east, is six and three-quarter miles, and its extreme length, a little over twelve. There are no pine-clad mountains, no bold headlands, no lofty precipices; the hills,—except at Khan Minyeh, the ancient Tarichæa, a little below Capernaum, where there is a small cliff,—

rise gradually, in a dull uniform brown, from the Lake, or from a fringe of plain; on the south and east, to about 1,000 feet, on the north-west to about 500. No prominent peak breaks the outline, but the ever-changing lights, and the rich tints of sunrise and sunset, prevent monotony. From the south of the Lake, the top of Hermon, often white with snow, stands out sharp and clear, in the bright sky, as if close at hand, and, towards the north, the twin peaks of Hattin crown a wild gorge, a little way below Capernaum. On the eastern side the hills rise in a barren wall, seamed with a few deep ravines, black basalt predominating, though varied here and there by the lighter grey limestone. No trees, no village, no spots of cultivated land, break the desolation which spreads like a living death over the landscape, except along the narrow stripe of green, about a quarter of a mile in breadth, that fringes the Lake. It was among these waste and lonely hills that Jesus often retired to escape the crowds which often oppressed Him. The hills on the western side slope more gently, and rise and fall in rounded tops, such as mark the softer limestone. The line of the shore, in the upper part of the Lake, is broken into a series of little bays of exquisite beauty.

The Rabbis were wont to say that God had made seven seas in the land of Canaan, but had chosen only one for Himself—the sea of Galilee. Josephus rightly called the land on its borders, "the crown" of Palestine. The plain of Gennesareth begins at Khan Minyeh, about two miles below Capernaum, filling in the bow-like recess, which the hills make from that point to Magdala. It is as romantic as beautiful, for the ravine at its southern end leads, at a short distance, to the towering limestone cliffs of Arbela, on whose heights numerous eagles now build, among the airy caverns, once the fortress alternately of robbers and patriots, to whom the valley offered a way to the Lake. Gennesareth was the richest spot in Palestine; five streamlets from the neighbouring hills quickening its rich dark volcanic soil into amazing fertility. It measures only about two and a half miles from north to south, by about a mile in depth, but, in the days of Christ, it must have been enchantingly beautiful. "Its soil," says Josephus, "is so fruitful that all kinds of trees grow in it. Walnuts flourish in great plenty; there are palm-trees also, which require heat, and figs and olives, which require a more temperate air. Nature seems, as it were, to have done violence to herself, to cause the plants of different lands to grow together. Grapes and figs ripen for ten months in the year, and other fruits fill up the other months."

No wonder the fruits of Gennesareth put to shame all else in the markets of Jerusalem. Its soil is still fertile in the extreme, and it lies between five and six hundred feet below the Mediterranean, which makes it very warm. Wheat, barley, millet, rice, melons, grapes, the common vegetables, tobacco, and indigo flourish, and date-palms, figs, citrons, and oranges are not wanting. Gennesareth melons are exported to Damascus and Acre, and are greatly prized.

The oleanders, and wild figs, palms, &c., rise, here and there, in rank luxuriance, and there can be no doubt that, in former times, when the whole soil was carefully tilled, few semi-tropical plants would have failed to grow. The climate of the lake shore, generally, is so mild even in winter, that snow seldom falls. In summer, on the other hand, it is oppressively hot, for, except at the plain of Gennesareth, which enjoys cool breezes from Lebanon, the hills shut out the west wind, which almost alone abates the intensity of the summer in Palestine, and hence the people of Tiberias are glad to sleep in shelters of straw or leaves on their roofs, during the hot months. Melons ripen four weeks earlier than at Acre and Damascus, and though wheat is not so early ripe as at Jericho, where the harvest is in May, it is ready for the sickle in June. A spot so charming, could not, however, escape some drawback. This sultry moist heat causes, along the marshy lake edge, a prevalence of fever, and sometimes brings the pestilence, and ophthalmia and sickness of various kinds are only too common.

The shores of the plain are white with myriads of little shells, over which the transparent, crystal-like waters rise and fall with the wind, and the side next the hills is shut in by a fringe of oleanders, rich, each May, in red and white blossom. In the days of Christ the whole landscape was full of life. Busy towns and villages crowded the shores, and the waters swarmed with boats, employed in the fisheries, which even gave their names to several of the towns. South of Capernaum lay the busy city of Tarichæa, or "Pickling Town,"—the great fish-curing port—which had boats enough to meet the Romans, a generation later, in a deadly sea-fight on the Lake, and had to see eight thousand of its citizens, and of those who had taken refuge in it, slain, and nearly forty thousand sold as slaves. It and Tiberias were the two ports in which the fishermen of Capernaum and Bethsaida found a ready sale for their freights. A little further south rose the houses of Magdala, or Migdal-El—"the Tower of God"—now Medschel,—the home of the Mary who bears its name. Then came Tiberias, with its splendid palace, grand public buildings, huge arsenal, and famous baths, glittering in the bright sunshine; its motley, busy population; and, beyond, rose, still, town beyond town. To the north, on the slope of the hills, a short way off, lay Chorazin, named, it might seem, from the "Corâcin" fish mentioned by Josephus as found in its neighbourhood. At the head of the Lake, on the other side of the Jordan, Bethsaida—"the Fisher's Town"—rebuilt, and re-named Julias, by the tetrarch Philip, was fresh from the hands of the masons and sculptors, and along the eastern shore lay Gergesa, Gamala, Hippos, and other swarming hives of men. The landscape is now very different. The thickly peopled shore is almost deserted. Tiberias, then so magnificent, has shrunk into a small and decaying town, like every place under Turkish rule; the white towns and villages, once reflected in the waters, have disap-

peared; the fleets of fishing boats are now replaced by one solitary crazy boat; the richly wooded hills are bare; the paradise-like plains are overgrown with thorns and thistles. The shore, varied by stretches of sand, intervals of white tiny shells, shingle with larger shells, here and there, and great beds of black basalt, which show the volcanic nature of the district, as do, also, the warm baths at Tiberias, is silent. Next the water, reeds and rushes grow in long reaches, in the flatter swampy parts—a favourite haunt of the pelican, and many other birds, but, above all, of the turtle-dove—the bird dearest from of old to the Jew. The whole must have been beautiful, however, in former days, to make the Emperor Titus compare it with the Lake of Neufchatel, in Switzerland, though, nowadays, the comparison seems fanciful.

It was in Capernaum that Jesus chose His home, in the midst of this life and beauty, beside the gleaming Lake, embosomed deep on this, its western shore, in soft terraced hills, laughing with fruitfulness; the higher hills of Upper Galilee rising beyond, and the majestic Hermon closing the glorious landscape. The view over the waters showed the steep slopes,—now yellow limestone, now black basalt,—which led up to the Gaulonitis country. Capernaum was the town of His three chief apostles, Peter, John, and James, and also of Andrew. Here He healed the centurion's slave, and raised the daughter of Jairus; called Matthew from the booth where he took the customs dues, and healed the mother-in-law of Peter. From a boat near the shore, close by, He preached to the crowds, and it was in the waters off the town that He vouchsafed to Peter and his brother the miraculous draught of fishes.

The whole neighbourhood, indeed, is sacred to the memory of Jesus. The Lake of Galilee had been chosen by God for Himself, and honoured above all seas of the earth, in a sense which the Rabbis little dreamed. The men, the fields, the valleys round it, are immortalized by their association with the Saviour. There were the vineyards, on the hill slopes, round which their lord planted a hedge, and in which he built a watch-tower, and dug a wine-press. There were the sunny hills, on which the old wine had grown, and the new was growing, for which the householder would take care to provide the new leather bottles. The plain of Gennesareth was the enamelled meadow, on which, in spring, ten thousand lilies were robed in more than the glory of Solomon, and where, in winter, the grass was cast into the oven. It was on such pastures as those around, that the shepherd left the ninety-and-nine sheep, to seek, in the mountains, the one that was lost, and bring it back, when found, on his shoulders, rejoicing. The ravens, that have neither storehouse nor barn, daily sailed over from the cliffs of Arbela, to seek their food on the shore of the Lake, and from the same cliffs, from time to time, flew forth the hawks, to make the terrified hen gather her chickens under her wings The orchards were there in which the fig-tree grew, on which

the dresser of the vineyard, in three years, found no fruit, and in which the grain of mustard seed grew into so great a tree that the fowls of the air lodged in its branches. Across the Lake, rose the hills of Gaulonitis, which the idly busy Rabbis watched for signs of the weather. A murky red, seen above them in the morning, was a text for these sky-prophets to predict "foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering," and it was when the sun sank, red and glowing, behind the hills in the west, that the solemn gossips, returning from their many prayers in the synagogue, made sure that it would be "fair weather to-morrow." It was when the sea-cloud was seen driving over the hill-tops from Ptolemais and Carmel that neighbours warned each other that a shower was coming, and the clouds sailing north, towards Safed and Hermon, were the accepted earnest of coming heat. The daily business of Capernaum, itself, supplied many of the illustrations so frequently introduced into the discourses of Jesus. He might see in the bazaar of the town, or on the street, the rich travelling merchant, who exchanged a heavy load of Babylonian carpets for the one lustrous pearl that had, perhaps, found its way to the Lake from distant Ceylon. Fishermen, and publicans, and dressers of vineyards passed and re-passed each moment. Over in Julias, the favourite town of the tetrarch Philip; below, in Tiberias, at the court of Antipas, lived the magnates, who delighted to be called "gracious lords," and walked in silk robes. The young Salome lived in the one town; her mother, Herodias, in the other; and the intercourse between the two courts could not have escaped the all-observing eye of Jesus, as He moved about in Capernaum.

It was this town, on the border between the districts of Philip and Antipas, on the great highway of commerce and travel, by the shore of the Lake, in the midst of thickly sown towns and villages, that Jesus selected as His future home. He seems, at first, to have lived with His mother and His brethren, and the few disciples He had already gathered, but His stay, at this time, was short, for He presently set out on His first Passover journey to Jerusalem. On His return, He appears to have made His abode, as often as He was in the town, in the house of Peter, who lived with his brother Andrew and his mother-in-law. It had a courtyard before it, and was on the shore of the Lake, but it was, at best, only the home of a rough-handed fisherman's household.

CHAPTER XXX.

VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

The choice of Capernaum by Jesus as His future centre was significant. John had chosen the "terrible wilderness," with its "vipers and scorpions, and drought." Jesus selected the district spoken of as "the garden of God," and "Paradise." John had lived amidst the silence of desolation: Jesus came to a centre of business and travel, to live amidst men. John kept equally aloof from priest, prince, or governor, from Rome and from Jerusalem; Jesus settled in a garrison town, noted for business, and near Tiberias, with its Idumean prince, the future murderer of the Baptist, and its gay courtiers. The contrast marked the vital difference between His work and that of His herald. He was to wear no prophet's mantle like John, but the simple dress of other men: to lay no stress on fasts, to enforce no isolation from any class, for He came to all men irrespective of class or nation.

Jesus had come, in fact, to preach a Gospel of which the glorious panorama around Him was the fit emblem. The "old wine" of Judaism, which had in a measure characterized the spirit of John, was to be replaced by the "new wine of the kingdom of God." John had sought to establish that kingdom anew on a Jewish foundation, by trying to blend together the spiritual and the external. While breaking away in some respects from the old theocracy, he had sought to build up a new outward constitution for Israel alone, and had imposed it, with its burden of fastings, washings, and endless legal requirements, in part, on the nation at large, and in all its severity, on himself and his disciples. He had proposed to heal the wounds of mankind by an unnatural withdrawal from the world, and by the austerities of ascetic observance. For this religion of endless, hopeless, struggle after legal purity, which carried with it no balm for the heart, and enforced morbid isolation, Jesus, by His settling in Capernaum, substituted that of peace and joy, and of a healthy intercourse with mankind, and citizenship in the great world. The religion of John was national, local, and unsatisfying, and marked by the spirit of caste: that of Jesus offered the splendid contrast of a faith which rose high over all that had hitherto been known. Suited alike for the peasant and the prince, it cared nothing for outward position, or the changes of states or nationality, but sought only to meet the wants and longings of man, in the inner infinite world of the heart and spirit, which no Herod could reach. Recognizing all good, wherever found, it gladly drew to itself all that was true and pure, and rejoiced to ally itself with the gifts which dignify human nature. The friend of man, it saw in every soul a pearl, hidden or visible, and ennobled every

honourable human calling by enlisting it in the service of God. It lifted men above care for the world or inclination to seek it, because it was not a religion of outward forms, of harsh legalities, or unnatural self infliction and isolation, but the religion of peace and joy in reconciliation with God, and the calm of jarring nature within—a religion which gave calmness amidst all want, and reflected the untroubled image of heaven in the soul, amidst suffering and trial—a religion which laid the agitations and cares of the bosom to rest, by the pledge of divine love and pity. The sweet fancy of the Portuguese mariner, who, after rounding Cape Horn, amidst storm and terrors, found that the ocean on which he had entered, lay, as if hushed asleep before him, and ascribed its calm to the glittering form of the southern cross shining down on it, was to be turned into fact, in the stillness of the hitherto troubled soul under the light of the Star of Bethlehem.

The stay of Jesus in Capernaum at this time was very short. He had resolved to attend the Passover, and only waited till it was time to do so. No details have been left us of this earliest ministry, but it could hardly have been encouraging, for even at a later date its recollections waked painful thoughts. The determination to carry His message beyond the narrow and ungracious circle of Capernaum, and the towns around, to a wider sphere, would be only strengthened by this result. Jerusalem, with its schools and Temple, was the place fitted beyond all others for His working with effect. He did not wish to be openly recognized as the Messiah as yet, but it was imperative now, at the opening of His ministry, that He should visit the great centre and heart of the nation, and unostentatiously open His great commission. The whole country looked to Jerusalem as its religious capital, and an impression made there would react everywhere.

The month of April, on the eve of the 15th of which the Passover was eaten, was the bright spring month of the year. The plains were covered with rich green, for it was the "earing month," and the grey hills lit up with red anemones, rock roses, red and yellow,—the convolvulus, marigold, wild geranium, red tulip, and a hundred other glories, for it was the "month of flowers." The cuckoo, unseen, as here, was heard around: our thrush and sweet-voiced blackbird flew off at the approach of a passer by: the voice of the turtle was heard in the land: the song of the lark flooded a thousand acres of upper air, and the pastures were alive with flocks and herds. The roads to Jerusalem were already crowded when the month began. Flocks of sheep, goats, and cattle from Bashan, daily passed over the fords of the Jordan, towards the Holy City, and shepherds with their flocks, from "the pastures of the wilderness," between Bethany, on the Mount of Olives, and the Dead Sea, or from the south country stretching away from Bethlehem, were in great excitement to bring their charge safely to the Temple market, for one hundred thousand lambs, alone, were needed, besides thousands of sheep and oxen. The roads

and bridges on the main lines of travel through the whole country had been repaired; all tombs whitewashed, to guard those coming to the feast from defilement, by unconscious approach to them: the fields examined, to weed out whatever illegal mixtures of plants defiled the land: and the springs and wells cleansed for the wants of the pilgrims, no less than to secure their legal purity.

Jerusalem was in its glory. The whole population was astir from the earliest morning, to enjoy the cool of the day and the excitements of the season. The hills of Moab were hardly purple with the dawn before the Temple courts were crowded, and by the time the sun rose from behind the Mount of Olives, leaving the morning clouds to float off and lose themselves in the deep valley of the Dead Sea, the business of the day had fully begun. The golden roofs and marble walls of the Temple reflected a dazzling brightness; the King's Pool, beyond the Tyropœon, seemed molten silver, and the palms, cypresses, olives, and figs, of the palace gardens, and among the mansions of the rich, on Zion and round the city, bent in the soft air. The concourse at the hour of morning prayer was immense, but it grew even greater as the day advanced. The streets were blocked by the crowds from all parts, who had to make their way to the Temple, past flocks of sheep, and droves of cattle, pressing on in the sunken middle part of each street reserved for them, to prevent contact and defilement. Sellers of all possible wares beset the pilgrims, for the great feasts were, as has been said, the harvest time of all trades at Jerusalem, just as, at Mecca, even at this day, the time of the great concourse of worshippers at the tomb of the Prophet, is that of the busiest trade among the merchant pilgrims, who form the caravans from all parts of the Mohammedan world.

Inside the Temple space, the noise and pressure were, if possible, worse. Directions were posted up to keep the right or the left, as in the densest thoroughfares of London. The outer court, which others than Jews might enter, and which was, therefore, known as the Court of the Heathen, was in part, covered with pens for sheep, goats, and cattle, for the feast and the thank-offerings. Sellers shouted the merits of their beasts, sheep bleated, and oxen lowed. It was, in fact, the great yearly fair of Jerusalem, and the crowds added to the din and tumult, till the services in the neighbouring courts were sadly disturbed. Sellers of doves, for poor women coming for purification, from all parts of the country, and for others, had a space set apart for them. Indeed, the sale of doves was, in great measure, secretly, in the hands of the priests themselves: Hannas, the high priest, especially, gaining great profits from his dove cots on Mount Olivet. The rents of the sheep and cattle pens, and the profits on the doves, had led the priests to sanction the incongruity of thus turning the Temple itself into a noisy market. Nor was this all. Potters pressed on the pilgrims their clay dishes and ovens for the Passover Lamb; hundreds of traders recommended their wares aloud; shops for wine, oil, salt,

and all else needed for sacrifices, invited customers, and, in addition, persons going across the city, with all kinds of burdens, shortened their journey by crossing the Temple grounds. The provision for paying the tribute, levied on all, for the support of the Temple, added to the distraction. On both sides of the east Temple gate, stalls had for generations been permitted for changing foreign money. From the fifteenth of the preceding month money-changers had been allowed to set up their tables in the city, and from the twenty-first,—or twenty days before the Passover,—to ply their trade in the Temple itself. Purchasers of materials for offerings paid the amount at special stalls, to an officer of the Temple, and received a leaden cheque for which they got what they had bought, from the seller. Large sums, moreover, were changed, to be cast, as free offerings, into one of the thirteen chests which formed the Temple treasury. Every Jew, no matter how poor, was, in addition, required to pay yearly a half-shekel—about eighteen pence—as atonement money for his soul, and for the support of the Temple. As this would not be received except in a native coin, called the Temple shekel, which was not generally current, strangers had to change their Roman, Greek, or Eastern money, at the stalls of the money-changers, to get the coin required. The trade gave ready means for fraud, which was only too common. Five per cent. exchange was charged, but this was indefinitely increased by tricks and chicanery, for which the class had everywhere earned so bad a name, that, like the publicans, their witness would not be taken before a court.

Jesus was greatly troubled by this monstrous desecration of His Father's house. He was a young unknown man, and a Galilæan: He had no formal authority to interfere, for the Temple arrangements were under the priests alone, but the sight of such abuses, in a place so holy, roused His inmost spirit. Entering the polluted Temple space, and gazing round on the tumult and manifold defilements, He could not remain impassive. Hastily tying together some small cords, and advancing to the sellers of the sheep and oxen, He commanded them to leave the Temple, with their property, at once, and drove them and their beasts out of the gates. The sellers of doves were allowed to take their cages away, but they, too, had to leave. The money-changers fared worst, as they deserved. Their tables were overturned, and they themselves expelled. After long years the Temple was once more sacred to God.

That one man should have effected such an amazing act may have been due, as St. Jerome says, "to the starry light which shone from His eyes, and to the divine majesty which beamed from His features," but it is not necessary to suppose such a miraculous aid. The weakness of a guilty conscience on the one side, and the grandeur of a supreme enthusiasm on the other, account for it. All were under a spell for the moment. It was an act such as Mattathias or Judas Maccabæus might have done, and prophet-like as it was, in such

a place, and in such a cause, its unique heroism secured its triumph.

The authorities, who were responsible for the abuse so astoundingly corrected, were no less paralyzed than the multitude at large, by the lofty zeal for God shown thus strangely. Rules of a strictness hitherto unknown were ereloug announced, and, for the moment, put in force, though, three years later, things had become as bad as ever. No one could henceforth go up to "the hill of the Lord" with a staff in his hand, or with his shoes on his feet, or with money in his girdle, or with a sack on his shoulder, or even with dust on his feet, and no one might carry a burden of any kind through the Temple, or even spit within the holy precincts, It was felt that religion had received a deadly injury by the evils against which the Galilæan stranger had thus signally protested, and a vain effort was made to restore the prestige they had themselves so fatally injured.

It was wholly in keeping with His office to act as Jesus had done. As His Father's House, the Temple was supremely under His care, and He only exercised His rights and duties, as the Messiah, in cleansing it as He did. It was a sign and commencement of the spiritual cleansing He came to inaugurate: a note struck which disclosed the character of His future work. Zechariah had said that in the days of the Messiah "the trader would no more be in the House of Jehovah," and thus even the prophets, whom the nation honoured, seemed to endorse His act.

The priests could say nothing condemnatory, but could only raise the question why *He* should have taken it upon Him to assume authority which they claimed. They were irritated beyond bounds, and doubtless indulged their scorn at a "prophet," who took on Himself the duties of the Temple police. Yet the people, by their silence, showed that they approved the act, though it implied condemnation of the high priest and his colleagues, and had attacked a custom sanctioned by age, established by formal authority, and identified with the interests of the Temple and its services. The crowds of pilgrims also honoured the act of the young Galilæan, of whom strange rumours had reached them from the Jordan, instinctively feeling that it was right. Jesus had made His entrance on public notice, in a way that struck the popular imagination,—as a true prophet, who witnessed fearlessly for God, against the desecration of His house. The feeling towards Him was half enthusiastic, half respectful; His enemies were confused and paralyzed. He was the valiant soldier of the Lord of Hosts, and it might have seemed as if the way to an easy triumph were to be expected forthwith.

But He and the people had wholly different conceptions of the office of the Messiah. He had acted as He had done from no personal end. His disciples saw that it was consuming zeal for His Father's glory, that had animated Him; a welling up of holy indignation. He had exercised the prophet's office, of striking for the true, and the pure;

a right which has been used in all ages, by lofty natures, when instituted means, and the low morality of the times, fail to stem growing corruption. Such an act could not be done, without overpowering, unreflecting earnestness, and zeal kindled into a flame, but this divine earnest zeal was not unworthy of the purest, for without it, in fallen times, nothing great can be done. Yet He was the Prince of Peace. It was not His nature to strive, or to make His voice heard in the streets. To have taken the tide of popular feeling at the full, would have led Him to triumphs for which He had no desire, and would have been fatal to His views, instead of advancing them. Numbers were, perhaps, willing to have believed that He might be the Messiah, had He announced Himself as such, but the Law had been given of old amidst thunderings and lightnings, and they expected the Kingdom of the Messiah to be proclaimed with equal sublimity. Unostentatious illustrations of divine power, such as healing the sick, opening the eyes of the blind, or the ears of the deaf, were not enough. They desired public and national miracles, which would glorify Israel, and astonish the world. But is was no part of His plan to attract the wonder of the crowd, or to minister to national pride, or inaugurate a dispensation of fear or force. His Kingdom was in the hearts of men, not in their outward suffrages; in the calm realms of truth, not in those of political strife.

The authorities could take no violent measures, and contented themselves with asking Him for some "sign," to justify His act by its divine authority, and incidentally reveal His claim on their homage, if, perchance, He might prove the Messiah. The question must have raised the sense of His supreme right as consecrated Son of God, and involved the condemnation of those by whom such a state of things had been allowed. Why had they, the appointed guardians of the Temple, been so powerless or negligent against such desecration? If they had thus failed, who but the Messiah alone, could cleanse the sanctuary, not partly, and for a time, but perfectly, and for ever? He answered them, therefore, as their Rabbis were wont to do, with an enigmatical sentence, which He left them to unriddle as they could. "Destroy this Temple," said He, doubtless pointing as He did so, to His person,—that Temple of God, pure and sacred beyond all others, —"and in three days I will raise it up." The sound of the words to a Jew, and their apparent meaning, were alike audacious. He was standing amid the long and lofty marble arcades of the sacred building; amidst its courts, paved with costliest stones, and rising terrace above terrace; its vast spaces, built up with incredible labour, and equal magnificence, from the valley, hundreds of feet below; its sanctuary, ablaze with gold; its wonderful gates of silver and gold, and Corinthian brass, which were the national pride. The very existence of the nation was identified with the inviolability of the Temple. It had been already building for forty-six years, and was not yet finished, for eighteen thousand workmen were still employed on

some incomplete parts of it, thirty years after this, and were paid off when their work was done, only a few years before the destruction of the city. The passionate fanaticism for a structure so splendid, and so bound up with the hopes and pride of the nation, was incredible. It seemed to them under the special protection of Jehovah. Antiochus Epiphanes, its great enemy, had perished miserably and shamefully in Persia. Crassus, who had plundered its treasures, had fallen with his army, amidst the thirsty sands of the desert. Pompey, who had intruded into the Holy of Holies, had been murdered by an Egyptian centurion, and his headless trunk had been left exposed on the strand of Egypt. To touch the Temple was, in the eyes of the Jew, to incur the vengeance of the Almighty. Perverting the answer of Jesus, therefore, into an allusion to the building which they revered with such a zealous idolatry, they tauntingly reminded Him of the years it had taken to build, and scouted His supposed proposal to destroy and restore it so quickly.

No utterance ever fell from the lips of Jesus, of which He did not forsee the full effect, and this answer, as He knew, was a veiled anticipation of His earthly end. The cry that the Temple was in danger would at any moment rouse the whole race to revenge the insult with the fury of despair, or perish in the attempt. The resentment felt at such words, may therefore be judged. Three years later it was by their perversion that the high priests sought His death, and they were coarsely flung as a taunt against Him, when He hung on the Cross. Nor were they forgotten even afterwards, for they were made an aggravation of the charges against the first martyr, Stephen, as His follower.

But they meant something of deepest significance to the Jews themselves. Though, doubtless, in their direct import a concealed announcement of His own death and resurrection, they had wider applications. "Your whole religion," they implied, "in as far as it rests on this Temple, is corrupt and sunken, but He is already here, who, when that Temple passes away, as pass away it must, will restore it in unspeakably greater glory, and His doing so will be the sign He gives." All this lay in His veiled sentence. "Do you really wish a sign from me, of my divine authority over this Temple? You shall have the highest. Destroy this Temple, which will surely one day fall, though, while it stands, I wish it to be pure and worthy: destroy it, if you choose, and with it let all your corrupted religion perish: I shall, presently, rebuild it again, with far greater glory than it can now boast, for this Temple is the desecrated and fallen work of men's hands, but mine will be pure: a Temple of the religion of Spirit and truth, which will be established by my resurrection, on the third day, and will be immortal and indestructible."

In the answer of Jesus, indeed, lay, already, the whole future of His Church. The history of His life and of His work is linked to this earliest utterance. The magnificent Temple He that day cleansed was

soon to be destroyed, mainly through the guilt of those who sought so fanatically to preserve it, with all its abuses. But, even before it rose in flames from the torch of the Roman soldier, or fell, stone from stone, before his tools, another temple, far more wonderful, had risen silently, in the spirits of men, to take its place—a temple pure and eternal, which He had now dimly foreshadowed, at this first moment of His public career. Yet, even the Church was in no such high sense the Temple of God as the mysterious person of Jesus Himself —the holiest tabernacle of God amongst men ever vouchsafed—the true Shekinah—the visible Incarnation of the Divine. After the crucifixion, and the resurrection, the exact fulfilment of His words, in these two great events, struck the imagination of the disciples more than any other meaning they might have. "He spoke of the Temple of His body." True in other senses, it was pre-eminently so in this.

With such an old-prophet-like first appearance, followed up, as it was, by acts of miraculous power, equal, no doubt, in character and greatness, to the examples elsewhere recorded in the Gospels, it is no wonder to learn that many believed on Him. Yet He received no one into the circle of His closer personal following from those thus impressed. No Scribe or Rabbi, no wealthy citizen, not even a common townsman of Jerusalem, was called to follow Him. "He did not trust Himself to them," nor honour any of them with the confidence He had shown in some of His Galilæan disciples. Nor did He relax this caution at any future time, for though He gained many friends in Judea, as we discover incidentally, He surrounded Himself with Galilæans to the end of His life. The people of Jerusalem contrasted unfavourably with the simpler peasants of the north: they were curious and excitable, rather than deep and earnest, and the wisdom of the schools, which flourished especially under the shadow of the Temple, was pre-eminently unfitted to understand Him, or ally itself closely with Him. The keen glance of Jesus saw this from the first. There were, doubtless, many of the rich and influential men of Jerusalem who felt the shortcomings of the prevailing school-wisdom and priestly system, and, fretting uneasily under the rule of a Herod, or of a Roman governor, were well inclined to join a true Israelitish king; many, possibly, who even secretly admired Jesus, and were ready to recognize Him as the Messiah, as soon as they could do so safely. But John, who was himself a Galilæan, and knew that Jesus had made only Galilæans His confidential friends, reveals, in his sententious epigrammatical way, His estimate of such doubtful support. "He did not trust Himself to them, because He knew all men, and because He needed not that any should bear witness respecting Him, as man." A cheerful witness to Him as the Son of God He always welcomed, when it came freely; but as to the other—He knew men's hearts. He could see that they were willing to honour Him as a human king, and *that*, only from His wonderful works and miracles, and they, unmistakably, expected a human kingdom at His hands

To rule, as a man, over men, it would have been needful to seek the support of the powerful, who would lend themselves for personal ends, and act on mere human maxims. But such men would be no counsellors, helpers, or servants in founding and spreading the Kingdom of Truth.

Among the upper class of citizens, however, there was one, the representative of many whose names are unrecorded, who was deeply moved by the words and acts of the young Galilæan. He bore the Greek name Nicodemus, and was a ruler, or foremost man, in the religious world of Jerusalem, a member of its governing class, and, in sentiment and party, a Pharisee. He was, moreover, wealthy, and, thus, in many respects, one whose support, at such a time, would have been eagerly grasped at, had Jesus proposed to found a kingdom in which the aids of human expediency were admitted, as in political systems. He was a man of advanced years and high position, and might, no doubt, have done good service to Christ's worldly interests among the influential classes, and have even helped towards a coalition of the priests and Pharisees with Him, had His aims been national, and religio-political, like theirs. There was, inevitably, a strong prejudice in Jerusalem against a movement which had begun in Galilee, and was supported by Galilæans, and Nicodemus might have helped to counteract it. It was a condition of his connection with Jesus, however, that it should be secret. Constitutionally timid, he could not brave the social proscription and ridicule, which would follow an open adherence; for, though no overt hostility to the New Teacher had yet broken out in the class to which he belonged, it was clear that its doing so was only a question of time. He was honest, and earnest, but could not yet make the sacrifice an open alliance demanded. Indeed, his caution clung to him to the end of Christ's life, for in the only two instances in which his name re-appears, his weak indirectness is plainly shown. At a later period, when the rulers had determined to use violence against Jesus, we find him trying to turn them aside from their purpose, by a general question which did not commit himself, and when all was over, it was not till he had caught spirit enough from the example of one of his own class, Joseph of Arimathea that he ventured to own his reverence for the dead Saviour, by bringing his bountiful gift of spices to embalm Him. At his first interview, he did not venture to visit Jesus openly, but came to Him by night.

As a Rabbi, Nicodemus was, necessarily, skilled in the subtle expositions of the Law for which his order was famous, and must have been familiar with the Scriptures throughout, but he had been trained in the artificial explanations of the schools, and was profoundly unconscious of their deeper meaning. Like others, he supposed that the Messiah would set up a theocracy distinguished by zealous fulfilment of the Law; every Israelite, as such, forming a member of it. Greeting Jesus as one whom he, and others in his position, acknowl-

edged to be a Rabbi, he opened the interview by a compliment, intended to lead to the point he had at heart. Any question as to his own admission to the Messiah's kingdom had not crossed his mind. The traditions of his brother Rabbis had taught him that while "the nations of the world would be as the burning of a furnace in the great Day of Judgment, Israel, as such, would be saved;" that "there was a part allotted to all Israel in the world to come," or, in other words, in the kingdom of the Messiah. "God had sanctified Israel to Himself for ever," and made every Jew, as such, on a footing, as to His love and favour, with "all the Angels of the Presence, and all the Angels of Praise, and with all the Holy Angels that stand before Him." Hence, he only wished to know the duties required of him as a member of the Messianic kingdom, which Jesus appeared to be sent from God to set up. Christ, in an instant, saw into the speaker's heart. So far from making any attempt to win him, or from abating His demands, as a compromise in favour of one whose support might be so advantageous, He cut him short by a statement which must have thrown his whole thoughts into confusion. Trusting implicitly to his being a Jew, as a divine title to citizenship in the new theocracy, and thinking only of formal acts by which he might show his devotion, and increase his claim to the favour of God, here and hereafter, he is met by an announcement, that neither national descent, nor the uttermost exactness of Pharisaic observance, nor any good works, however great, as such, availed at all to secure entrance into the kingdom of God. He had supposed Jesus a Rabbi, and had expected to hear some new legal precepts, but he is told that not only has he no title whatever, as a Jew, to share in the new kingdom, but that he cannot hope to earn one. Jewish theology knew nothing higher than an exact equivalent in good or evil, for every act. "An eye for an eye," both here and hereafter, was its only conception. A legal precision had a right to heaven; the neglect of Levitical righteousness shut its gates on the soul.

Jesus broadly told him that his whole conceptions were fundamentally wrong. "Every man, whatever his legal standing, must be born again, if he would see the kingdom of God. To do so is not a question of outward acts, legal, or moral, but of their motive." The idea of being "born again" should not have been incomprehensible to a Jewish Rabbi, for it was a saying of the Scribes that "a proselyte is like a child new born," and "circumcision of the heart," and the "creating a clean heart and renewing a right spirit," are expressions that must have been familiar to him in the Law, and the Prophets, and the Psalms. But the full meaning of such terms had been lost in the prevailing externalism. He took the words in their literal sense. In his perplexity, he supposed that what was demanded was in some way connected with his nationality, which, he assumed, already opened an unquestioned entrance for him into the theocracy.

Jesus saw his embarrassment, and forthwith explained His meaning

more fully. "The kingdom of God," He told him, "was none the less a true kingdom that it stood aloof from politics, and had none of the outward characteristics of earthly states. It had no civil judges, but it had its laws, and by these all its subjects would hereafter be tried, beyond the grave. It had its conditions of acceptance, also, and these were belief in Himself as its Founder, Legislator, and future Judge, and open confession of that belief by the rite of Baptism, with which Nicodemus was already familiar, from the ministry of John. There could be no admission of any one, high or low, at a secret interview, to be followed by concealment of the relation thus formed with Himself. There must be personal homage and submission to Him, but it must also be frankly and publicly avowed."

Nor was Nicodemus left to suppose that any outward and formal act, even if inclusive of these demands, would alone suffice. Baptism was but the symbol of a spiritual revolution so complete that it might well be described as a new birth. All men were by nature sinful, and needed a moral transformation, which would make them as naturally seek the pure and holy as they had sought the opposite. Citizenship in His kingdom was a gift of God Himself; the re-creation of the moral nature by His Spirit, as the result of which the soul hungered after good, as, before, after sin.

Nor was Nicodemus to wonder at such a statement. God's influence on the heart was like the flowing wind—free, felt, and yet mysterious. It came as it listed, its presence was felt by its results, but all besides was beyond our knowledge.

Teaching so fundamentally different from all his previous ideas, and involving conceptions so unique and sublime, was for the time incomprehensible. The startled listener could only mutter, "How can these things be?" Nicodemus, it seems very probable, was one of the chief men of the religious world in Jerusalem, for the three officers of the Sanhedrim, while it existed, were the President, the Vice-President, and the "Master," or wise man, and Jesus appears to address him as "Master," in subdued reproach at his perplexity. "Art thou," He asked, "*the* teacher,"—well known and recognized as such—the wise man—even by title, "and dost not know these things? I speak only what I know and have seen, in the eternal world, and you hesitate to believe Me. If I have told you thus of what is matter of experience, and runs its course in the human heart during this earthly life, and you think it incomprehensible, how will you believe if I tell you the higher truths of the kingdom—those heavenly mysteries which concern the plan of God for the salvation of man? No other can reveal such matters, for no man has ever ascended to heaven to learn them; but I am He—the Messiah, foretold, as the Son of Man, by your prophet Daniel,—who have come down from heaven, and, even now, have there my peculiar home and seat. Let Me vouchsafe you some glimpses of the true nature of my kingdom. I come not as a triumphant earthly monarch, but to suffer.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, to save those who believed in it, so must I be lifted up—how, you shall know hereafter—that all who believe in Me may not perish, but have eternal life. I have come to carry out, as a suffering Messiah, the high purpose of God's eternal love for the salvation of man."

"You seek eternal life: it can be had only by believing on Me. He who does so, has his reward even here, in the love, light, and peace which flow from the gift of the Spirit, and are the earnest of future glory. I have not come to judge men, for to judge would have been to condemn. I come to save. They who reject Me are, indeed, judged and condemned already, for when I, the Light, have come to them, they have shown their character by preferring the darkness of sin. Men separate themselves into good and evil, before God, by their bearing towards Me. The evil wish not to be disturbed, and to be let stay in moral darkness, to follow out their sinful desires, but he who seeks the truth comes to Me to have more light. Thus, the evil stand self-condemned: the good rejoice in their growing light, as an earnest of heaven."

The astonishing originality of such language is altogether unique. At His first appearance, though still a young man, without the sanction of success, or the weight of position, or the countenance of the schools, Jesus bears Himself, with calm unconsciousness of effort, as altogether superior to His visitor. A born Jew, He speaks as the Lawgiver of a new theocracy which He has come to found, in place of that of Moses, whom they almost worshipped. He lays down conditions of unbending strictness as indispensable to an entrance into the new community thus to be established, though He has nothing to offer but privation and self-denial, as the earthly result of joining it. He moves at His ease amidst subjects the most august and mysterious: demands the personal homage of those who would enter His kingdom, and promises eternal life as the reward of sincere acceptance of His claims. Repudiating the aids to which others might have looked, seeking no support from the powerful, or from the crowd, to facilitate His design; He speaks of Himself, even now, when obscure and alone, as a king, and shows a serene composure in extending His royalty over even the souls of men. In the presence of a famous Rabbi, He claims to be the light to which all men, without exception, must come, who love the truth. His first utterance anticipates the highest claims of His last. An humble Galilæan, easy of access, sympathetic, obscure, He calmly announces Himself as the Son of Man, whose home is heaven: as knowing the counsels of God from eternity: as the only-begotten Son of the Eternal, and the arbiter of eternal life or death to the world. It is idle to speak of any merely human utterances, even of the greatest and best of our race, in the presence of such thoughts and words as these: they are the voice of a higher sphere, though falling from the lips of one who walked as a man amongst men.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FROM JERUSALEM TO SAMARIA.

THE stay of Jesus in Jerusalem was short, for He had come up only to attend the Passover, and to open His Great Commission in the religious centre of the nation, before the vast throngs of pilgrims frequenting the feast. Nor were the results disappointing, for "many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did" during the week. With the departure of the multitudes, however, He, also, left, to enter with His disciples on His first wide circuit of preaching and teaching, for, though a beginning had already been made in Galilee, it had been on a much smaller scale.

The district thus favoured embraced the whole of Judea, which extended, on the south, to the edge of the wilderness at Beersheba, far south of Hebron, to the lowlands of the Philistine plain, on the west; to the line of the Jordan and the Dead Sea, on the east, and, on the north, to Akrabbim, the frontier village of Samaria, which lay among the hills, twenty-five miles, as the crow flies, from Jerusalem. We have the authority of the Apostle Peter, who very likely shared the journey, that it extended "throughout all Judea," but we have no record of the towns and villages thus early favoured with the Message of the New Kingdom.

How long the tour lasted we do not know, but it must have occupied some months, for He "tarried" from time to time, at different points, He Himself preaching and teaching, and His disciples baptizing the converts gained. It was not fitting that Jesus should Himself administer the rite which admitted citizens to His spiritual kingdom. Baptism, which had been introduced by John as a symbol of repentance and spiritual renewal, in expectation of the coming Messiah, had now acquired the far grander significance of a profession of faith in Jesus, as the Messiah already come. John's baptism had implied a vow to live in the strict and painful Jewish asceticism of washings, fasts, and legal observances; that of Jesus transformed this life into one of divine liberty and loving joy. The material baptism, moreover, was but the symbol, and might well be left to His disciples, Himself retaining the far grander ministry of the dispensation of the Spirit, which cleansed the moral nature, as water did the body. They had the emblem: He, as became a King, kept in His own hands the substance and reality. To preach the Gospel, not to baptize, was hereafter, even in St. Paul's view, the special commission of an Apostle. Humbler agencies could be left to perform the rite: to the higher office, Jesus devoted His higher rank.

The introduction of baptism at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, is mentioned only by St. John. It may be that this is only an

instance of the omissions of the Evangelists, and that careful examination would find indirect indications that it not only began with the opening of Christ's ministry, but continued, throughout, till the close. Yet, both St. Matthew and St. Mark mention the command given by Jesus immediately before His ascension, to baptize all nations, without any indication of its being the continuance of an existing custom, rather than the re-introduction of what had been for a time in abeyance. Possibly, the extension of the rite to all nations, may have been the special reason of its being thus prominently noticed, but, more probably, the opposition of the ecclesiastical authorities, which broke out into active hostility as soon as the new movement grew popular, and forced Jesus to leave Judea, made it necessary to disarm opposition by suspending the practice.

The ecclesiastical world of the day—priests, elders, and scribes—had rejected the mission of John. They had inquired into his claims, attended his preaching, and held intercourse with his disciples, but they had not been baptized. They "rejected the counsel of God against themselves," and even went so far, in order to discredit John with the multitude, as to insinuate that he "had a devil." His real offence was having stood aloof from them—the established religious authorities—and he had shocked their self-complacency, and impeached their theology, by declaring the worthlessness, before God, of mere nationality. But Jesus was already treading in the same steps, and had gone even further in independence of the priests and Rabbis, in His acts and teachings; in His cleansing the Temple, and in His discourse with Nicodemus. Before long, moreover, His movement assumed greater importance than John's, and threatened to draw the whole nation from allegiance to the dignitaries of Jerusalem. The fate of John, moreover, was, probably, in great part, due to his being under official censure, and it is not improbable, if Salim were in Judea, or even in Samaria, as many suppose, that the machinations of the authorities had contributed to his arrest, and to his being handed over to Antipas. He had fled for safety to the west side of the Jordan, to be under Roman law, but it is wholly in keeping with Pilate's treacherous nature to believe, that in his dread of the priests and Rabbis, the Roman governor consented to seize the prophet, and deliver him up to death, as he afterwards did with Jesus Himself. With such a catastrophe in mind, it would have been opposed to the calm prudence with which Jesus at all times acted, to have sought the publicity and excitement soon developed in connection with His early baptismal gatherings.

It is a question, besides, whether the official opposition which made any action inexpedient that tended to agitate the public mind, did not, also, compel delay in the outward organization of the new communion which Jesus came to found. His spiritual kingdom could be proclaimed, its laws and privileges made known, and citizens gained, as disciples, in detail, but their final enrolment as a distinct

society would likely have resulted in the instant arrest of their leader. The air was too full of political rumours, in connection with a national Messiah, to have made that organization practicable while Jesus lived, which was at once announced after His death. If this were so, baptism, as the symbol of entrance into the new society, might be well deferred till that society was actually begun, on the day of Pentecost.

The burden of Christ's preaching, while journeying throughout Judea, was, no doubt, the same as that of His Galilæan ministry a little later, and as that of John's—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The time had not yet come for His openly proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, though He acted from the first as such, without formally assuming the title. To have done so would have arrested His work at once, while His acts and words, without compromising Him with the authorities, were such as forced men, and even the spirits He cast out, to own His true dignity. Indeed, the very nature of a spiritual kingdom like His, founded necessarily only on the free convictions of men, not on assertion or authority, demanded this reticence. The heart of man, which was to be the seat of His empire, could be won only by the spiritual attractions of His life and words. Faith and loving obedience could only spring from sympathy with the truth and goodness His life and words displayed, and this sympathy must be spontaneous in each new disciple, and was often of slow attainment. The kingdom, to use His own illustrations, must grow from almost unperceived beginnings, in slow development, like the mustard seed, and spread by silent and slow advance, like leaven. It was, in its very nature, to come "without observation," unmarked, for it was not political, like earthly kingdoms, but the invisible reign of truth in the souls of men—a growth of opinion—a kingdom not of this world.

In this opening period John still continued his great preparatory work. He had crossed from the eastern to the western side of Jordan, and was baptizing at Enon, near Salim—a place, the position of which is not positively known. He had, apparently, expected Jesus to begin His work as the Messiah, by an open assumption of the title, and seems to have been at a loss to account for a comparative privacy, so different from his anticipations. The idea of a great national movement, with Jesus at its head, was natural to him, nor does he seem to have realized that the sublimest self-proclamation our Lord could make was by the still small voice of His divine life and words. He was waiting calmly for a signal to retire, which had not yet been given. Nor was it a superfluous work to continue to point the multitudes to the Lamb of God, and thus prepare them, by the weight of a testimony so revered, for accepting Him to whom he thus directed them.

Human nature, however, is always the same: ready to show its weakness, even in connection with what is most sacred. The grand

humility of John—inaccessible to a jealous thought—was contented to be a mere voice, sending men away from himself to his great successor. But his followers were not, in all cases, so lowly, and occasion soon offered which gave their feelings expression. A Jew, who had, apparently, attended the ministry of both John and Jesus, had shown the common bias of his race by getting into a discussion with some of John's disciples, about the comparative value of their master's baptism, as a means of purification, perhaps both morally and leviticallly, as compared with that of Jesus. A theological controversy between Jews, as between Christians, is dangerous to the temper, and, indeed, the Rabbis denounced quietness and composure in such matters as a sign of religious indifference. Warmth and bitterness were assumed to prove zeal for the Law. Hence, no doubt, there was abundant heat and wrangling on an occasion like this, the whole resulting in a feeling of irritation and jealousy on the part of the champions of John, against One who had thus been set up as his rival. In this spirit they returned to their master, and proceeded to relieve their minds by telling him that He who was with him beyon l Jordan, to whom he had borne witness, and to whom he had thus given a standing and influence, had Himself begun to baptize. It appeared like unfair rivalry, and was creating just such a sensation as John had caused at first, for now all were flocking to the new Rabbi, as, formerly, to the banks of the Jordan.

The greatness of the Baptist could not have been shown more strikingly than in his reply to a complaint so fitted to touch his personal sensibilities. "You are wrong," said he, "in thinking thus of Him to whom you refer. If He meet such success, it is given Him from God, for a man can receive nothing except it have been given him from heaven. You can yourselves bear witness that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but am sent before Him.'" John was regarded by the nation at large as a prophet, and, as such, he was venerated so greatly, that, even after his death, many explained the miracles of Jesus by supposing that He was John, risen again from the dead, clothed with the transcendent powers of the spirit world from which he had returned. Later still, the ecclesiastical authorities were afraid the people would stone them if they spoke of his baptism as merely human. He was now the foremost man in the land, but his splendid humility never for a moment deserted him. "He may make no kingly show," he continued, "and may have raised no excitement, but He is far above me. You know how the friend of the bride leads her home to the bridegroom—how he goes before the choir of companions that escort her, and brings her, with loud rejoicings, to her lord. I am only that friend, the Kingdom of God is the bride, and Jesus the Heavely Bridegroom. The prophets of old have foretold the espousals of heaven and earth: they are fast approaching: the kingdom of the Messiah is even now at hand, and will fulfil the promise. Let us be glad, and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife has made herself ready. The friend listens for the bridegroom's voice, to obey his commands, and promote his joy, and rejoices to hear it, when he has led the bride to him. My joy is fulfilled, in having stirred up the multitude to flock to the ministrations of the Lamb of God, and I rejoice in His being so near me that I seem to catch His voice. He must increase; I must decrease. I am but the morning star; He, the rising sun. He comes from above, and is, thus, above all; I am only a man like yourselves, of the earth, and speak as a man, what I have been sent by God to utter. He is the Messiah from heaven, and speaks what He has seen and heard in the eternal world—speaks from His own direct knowledge. I only repeat what may be revealed to me, here below. My mission is well nigh over, and I now only finish my testimony before I finally vanish. But, though thus worthy of all honour, few receive His witness: it is an evil generation that seeks a Messiah very different from the holy Messiah of God. He who believes in Him glorifies the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promises to send salvation to man. For the Gospel He proclaims is but the utterance of the precious words of God the Father to our race, and, thus, in believing His Son, we honour Him who sent Him. Prophets, and even I, the Baptist, receive the Spirit only in the measure God is pleased to grant, but God pours out His gifts on Him without measure."

Such thoughts filled the speaker's heart with tender adoration, which embodied itself in closing words of wondrous sublimity. "You may well believe on Him," said he, "for the Father has given all things into His hand,—eternal life and outer darkness. He has not only the divine anointing of the Messiah, but the awful power. To be saved by the works of the Law is, moreover, hopeless: faith in Him is the one Salvation. It is momentous, therefore, that you receive Him, for to reject Him is to perish. Blessed is he who believes in Him: he has, even now, the beginnings in his soul of the divine life which survives death and never dies. Woe to him who will not hear His voice. He shall never see life; but the wrath of God will burn against him abidingly!"

Jesus had now remained in Judea about nine months, from the Passover, in April, to the winter sowing time, in December or January. The crowds that came to hear Him, though rarely to receive His "witness," grew daily larger, and His fame spread far and near, even to Galilee. His very success, however, in attracting numbers, made His retirement to another district necessary, for in Judea He was under the keen and unfriendly eyes of the bigoted religious world of Jerusalem, who saw in Him a second rival, more dangerous than the Baptist. His bearing towards them had been seen in the cleansing of the Temple, and His miracles were likely to give Him even more power over the people than John had had, and to lead them to a revolt from the legal slavery to Rabbinical rules, in

which the Jerusalem Scribes and Pharisees held them There had, as yet, been no open hostility, but it was not in keeping with the spirit of Jesus to provoke persecution. His hour had not yet come, and to brave danger at present, when duty did not demand it, would have been contrary to His whole nature. Hereafter, when duty called Him to do so, He would voluntarily come, not to Judea alone, but to Jerusalem, though He knew it meant His death.

But, apart from the kindling jealousy of the Pharisees, the people themselves were sufficient explanation of the return of Jesus to Galilee. He was no mere popularity hunter, flattered by the idle curiosity that drew crowds to see what wonder He might perform. He had numbers, but yet His mission, in the only light in which He regarded results, had been little better than sowing on the wayside, or the stony place, or among thistles and thorns. He had made so few disciples, that John could speak of them as none. The fame He had gained might serve Him elsewhere, but He measured the claims of a locality on His ministrations, not by the numbers who came to Him, but by the proportion won to God.

The direct road to Galilee ran through the half-heathen country of Samaria, and this Jesus resolved to take, though men of His nation generally preferred the circuitous route by Perea, rather than pass through the territory of a race they hated. It ran north from Jerusalem, past Bethel, between the height of Libona on the left hand, and of Shiloh on the right, entering Samaria at the south end of the beautiful valley, which, further north, stretches past the foot of Mounts Gerizim and Ebal. He must have started in the early morning, to reach Sychar by noon, and must have been near the boundary to have done so at all, in the short morning of a winter's day. The road was proverbially unsafe for Jewish passengers, either returning from Jerusalem or going to it, for it passed through the border districts where the feuds of the two rival peoples raged most fiercely. The paths among the hills of Akrabbim, leading into Samaria, had often been wet with the blood of Jew or Samaritan, for they were the scene of constant raids and forays, like our own border marches between Wales or Scotland, in former days. It had been dangerous even in the days of Hosea, eight hundred years before, but it was worse now. The pilgrims from Galilee to the feasts were often molested, and sometimes even attacked and scattered, with more or less slaughter; each act of violence bringing speedy reprisals from the population of Jerusalem and Judea, on the one side, and of Galilee on the other; the villages of the border districts, as most easily reached, bearing the brunt of the feud, in smoking cottages, and indiscriminate massacre of young and old.

The country, as He approached Samaritan territory, was gradually more inviting than the hills of Southern Judea. "Samaria," says Josephus, "lies between Judea and Galilee. It begins at a village in the great plain (of Esdraelon) called Ginea (Engannim), and ends at

the district, or 'toparch,' of Akrabbim, and is of the same character as Judea. Both countries are made up of hills and valleys, and are moist for agriculture, and very fruitful. They have abundance of trees (mostly long since cut down), and are full of autumnal fruit, both wild and cultivated. They are not naturally watered by many rivers, but derive their chief moisture from the rains, of which they have no want. As to the rivers they have, their waters are exceedingly sweet. By reason, also, of the excellent grass, their cattle yield more milk than those of other places, and both countries show that greatest proof of excellence and plenty—they are, each, very full of people." In our days, Samaria is more pleasant than Judea. The limestone hills do not drink in the waters that fall on them like those of the south. Rich level stretches of black soil, overflowed in the wet season, form splendid pastures, which alternate, in the valleys, with fertile tracts of corn-land, gardens, and orchards. Grape-vines, and many kinds of fruit-trees, cover the warm slopes of the limestone hills, and groves of olives and walnuts crown their rounded tops. The meadows of Samaria have always been famous. The prophets, already, speak of the pastures on its downs, and of the thickets of its hill-forests. As Josephus tells us, the supply of rain was abundant on the hills, and made them richly wooded. The climate was so good and healthy, that the Romans greatly preferred the military stations in Samaria to those of Judea. Yet the landscape is tame and monotonous compared to that of Galilee. Its flat valleys, and straight lines of hills, all rounded atop, and nearly of a height, contrast unfavourably with the bold scenery of the Galilæan highlands—the home of Jesus.

Having reached the top of the steep hill, up which the path stretches, the large and fertile plain of Mukhna, running north and south, lay beneath Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, the giants of the mountains of Ephraim, which rose midway on its western side, while low chains of gently sloping hills enclosed it, as a whole. The path descends towards the hills which skirt the western side of the plain, and runs along their base, rising and falling in long undulations. Picturesque clumps of trees still dot the hill-sides, and bare, precipitous faces of rock rise above the green fields and olive-yards, which, more or less, cover the slopes, mingling, at last, with trees above. Half-way up the plain, a small valley opens to the west, between Ebal and Gerizim, which rise, steep and precipitous on the side next the plain, to the height, respectively, of 1,250 and 1,100 feet, both, as seen from below, equally sterile. The path enters the valley by a gentle rise, and a brook of fresh, clear water, which turns a mill on its way, flows out with a pleasant murmur, into the plain. On the left, Gerizim rises in rugged and bold masses; on the right, Ebal, which, though steep, is terraced to a considerable height, with gardens fenced by the fig cactus; other terraces, planted with corn, rising, in some parts, even to the summit.

The town of Nablûs—the ancient Shechem—is about a mile and a-half from the mouth of this side valley, in which it stands. Luxuriant gardens, richly watered, girdle it round outside its old and dilapidated walls, whose gates, hanging off their hinges, are an emblem of all things else, at this day, in Palestine. The valley, at the town, is so narrow, that a strong man might almost shoot an arrow from the one hill to the other. The houses of Nablûs are stone—a number of them of several stories—with small windows and balconies, and low doors, over which texts of the Koran are often painted, as a sign that the householder has made the pilgrimage to Mecca. It is a very small place, stretching from east to west; with narrow covered streets, running north and south from the two principal ones. Their sides are raised, so as to leave a filthy, sunken path, in the middle, for cattle; but, as a set-off to this, many copious fountains and clear rivulets, flow through those on the west of the town.

To this ancient town, then in its glory, and very different from its present condition—along this path—Jesus was coming, no doubt agreeably impressed by the beauties of a spot unequalled in Palestine for its landscape. Clumps of lofty walnut trees, thick groves of almond, pomegranate, olive, pear, and plum trees adorned the outskirts, and ran towards the opening of the valley. The weather was bright and warm, and the brightness would fill the many-coloured woods and verdure, with the melodious songs of birds. The clear, sweet notes of our own blackbird; the loud thrill of the lark, high overhead, and the chirping of finches, in each copse, rose then, as now. The brooks of clear mountain water then, as to-day, played, and splashed, and murmured, past. Thousands of flowers enamelled the grass on the slopes, for the "blessings of Joseph" reached their highest in the valley of Shechem. "The land of Syria," said Mahomet, "is beloved by Allah beyond all lands, and the part of Syria which He loveth most is the district of Jerusalem, and the place which He loveth most in the district of Jerusalem is the Mountain of Nablûs." The contrast with nature was only an anticipation of the brighter spiritual prospect. But before Jesus came to the town, He halted for a time to rest.

Close under the eastern foot of Gerizim, at the opening of the side valley from the wide plain, on a slight knoll, a mile and a half from the town, surrounded, now, by stones and broken pillars, is Jacob's well. The ruins are those of an old church, which stood over the well as early as the fifth century, but has long ago perished in the storms of the times. Over the well, a few years since, were still to be seen the remains of an alcove, such as is built beside most Eastern wells, to give a seat and shelter to the tired wayfarer. There is no question that the name of the ancient patriarch is rightly given. Thirty or forty springs are found in the neighbourhood, but they were, doubtless, already, in Jacob's day, private property, so that he had no alternative but to sink a well for himself. Nor was it a slight un-

dertaking, for it is dug through the alluvial soil, to an unknown depth, and lined, throughout, with strong rough masonry. It is still about seventy-five feet deep, but so recently as 1838 it was thirty feet deeper, each year helping to fill it up, from the practice of all who visit it, both natives and travellers, to throw in stones, to hear their rebound. This custom, which may be recent, adding to the accumulations of over two thousand years, has filled it up perhaps one-half. The shaft is seven and a half feet in diameter, and the whole work must have been the labour of years. It is exactly on the watershed of the district, but as it depends on rain-water only, it is, now, often dry, though, perhaps, when of a greater depth, always more or less full. Lieut. Anderson descended it in 1866 and found it quite dry, but an unbroken pitcher at the bottom showed that there was water in it at some seasons. Latterly, it has been buried under a great heap of stones, hiding its mouth, which Lieut. Anderson found in a sunken chamber twenty feet deep, the opening being just large enough to admit a man's body.

Tired with His long mountain walk, and by the heat of noon—for it was midday, and noon in Palestine, even in December, is often warm—Jesus was glad to turn aside and rest by Jacob's well. It was, moreover, the hour for refreshment, and He resolved to stay in the grateful shade of the trees and the alcove, till His disciples went up the little valley to the town to buy food. The funds supplied by friends, who delighted to minister to Him, provided the ready means.

While thus resting, a Samaritan woman, from Sychar, which may have been the same place as Shechem, or, perhaps, was the village near the well, now known as Askar, approached, with a water jar on her head, as is the custom, and a long cord in her hand, with which to let the jar down the well. Few sought the place at that hour, for evening was the common time for drawing water, and thus Jesus and she were alone. To ask a draught of water is a request no one in the East thinks of refusing, for the hot climate makes all feel its value. Hence, under ordinary circumstances, it might have been expected, on Jesus asking this favour, that it would be granted as a matter of course. His dress, or dialect, however, had shown the woman that He was a Jew, and the relations between Jews and Samaritans made His seeking even such a trifling courtesy from her seem strange, for the two nations were mortal enemies. After the deportation of the ten tribes to Assyria, Samaria had been repeopled by heathen colonists from various provinces of the Assyrian empire, by fugitives from the authorities of Judea, and by stragglers of one or other of the ten tribes, who found their way home again. The first heathen settlers, terrified at the increase of wild animals, especially lions, and attributing it to their not knowing the proper worship of the God of the country, sent for one of the exiled priests, and, under his instructions, added the worship of Jehovah to that of their idols—an incident in their history,

from which later Jewish hatred and derision taunted them as "proselytes of the lions," as it branded them, from their Assyrian origin, with the name of Cuthites. Ultimately, however, they became even more rigidly attached to the Law of Moses than the Jews themselves. Anxious to be recognized as Israelites, they set their hearts on joining the two tribes, on their return from captivity, but the stern puritanism of Ezra and Nehemiah admitted no alliance between the pure blood of Jerusalem and the tainted race of the north. Resentment at this affront was natural, and excited resentment in return, till, in Christ's day, centuries of strife and mutual injury, intensified by theological hatred on both sides, had made them implacable enemies. The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, to rival that of Jerusalem, but it had been destroyed by John Hyrcanus, who had also levelled Samaria to the ground. They claimed for their mountain a greater holiness than that of Moriah; accused the Jews of adding to the word of God, by receiving the writings of the prophets, and prided themselves on owning only the Pentateuch as inspired: favoured Herod because the Jews hated him, and were loyal to him and the equally hated Roman; had kindled false lights on the hills, to vitiate the Jewish reckoning by the new moons, and thus throw their feasts into confusion, and, in the early youth of Jesus, had even defiled the very Temple itself, by strewing human bones in it, at the Passover.

Nor had hatred slumbered on the side of the Jews. They knew the Samaritans only as Cuthites, or heathen from Cuth. "The race that I hate is no race," says the son of Sirach. It was held that a people who once had worshipped five gods could have no part in Jehovah. The claim of the Samaritans that Moses had buried the Tabernacle and its vessels on the top of Gerizim, was laughed to scorn. It was said that they had dedicated their temple, under Antiochus Epiphanes, to the Greek Jupiter. Their keeping the commands of Moses even more strictly than the Jews, that it might seem they were really of Israel, was not denied; but their heathenism, it was said, had been proved by the discovery of a brazen dove, which they worshipped, on the top of Gerizim. It would have been enough that they boasted of Herod as their good king, who had married a daughter of their people; that he had been free to follow, in their country, his Roman tastes, so hated in Judea: that they had remained quiet, after his death, when Judea and Galilee were in uproar, and that a fourth of their taxes had been remitted and added to the burdens of Judea, for their peacefulness. Their friendliness to the Romans was an additional provocation. While the Jews were kept quiet only by the sternest severity, and strove to the utmost against the introduction of anything foreign, the Samaritans rejoiced in the new importance which their loyalty to the empire had given them. Shechem flourished: close by, in Cæsarea, the procurator held his court: a division of cavalry, in barracks at Sebaste—the old Samaria—had been raised in the territory. The Roman strangers were

more than welcome to while away the summer in their umbrageous valleys.

The illimitable hatred, rising from so many sources, found vent in the tradition that a special curse had been uttered against the Samaitans, by Ezra, Scrubbabel, and Joshua. It was said that these great ones assembled the whole congregation of Israel in the Temple, and that three hundred priests, with three hundred trumpets, and three hundred books of the Law, and three hundred scholars of the Law, had been employed to repeat, amidst the most solemn ceremonial, all the curses of the Law against the Samaritans. They had been subjected to every form of excommunication; by the incommunicable name of Jehovah; by the Tables of the Law, and by the heavenly and earthly synagogues. The very name became a reproach. "We know that Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil," said the Jews, to Jesus, in Jerusalem. "There may be friendliness between Samaria and Jerusalem," said a young Rabbi, summing up the points in dispute between his nation and the Samaritans, "when the Cuthites have no more to do with Mount Gerizim; when they praise Israel, and believe in the resurrection of the dead—but not till then." No Israelite could lawfully eat even a mouthful of food that had been touched by a Samaritan, for, "to do so was as if he ate the flesh of swine." No Samaritan was allowed to become a proselyte, nor could he have any part in the resurrection of the dead. A Jew might be friendly with a heathen, but never with a Samaritan, and all bargains made with one were invalid. The testimony of a Samaritan could not be taken in a Jewish court, and to receive one into one's house would bring down the curse of God. It had even become a subject of warm controversy how far a Jew might use food or fruit grown on Samaritan soil. What grows on trees or in fields was reckoned clean, but it was doubtful respecting flour or wine. A Samaritan egg, as the hen laid it, could not be unclean, but what of a boiled egg? Yet interest and convenience strove, by subtle casuistry, to invent excuses for what intercourse was unavoidable. The country of the Cuthites was clean, so that a Jew might, without scruple, gather and eat its produce. The waters of Samaria were clean, so that a Jew might drink them or wash in them. Their dwellings were clean, so that he might enter them, and eat or lodge in them. Their roads were clean, so that the dust of them did not defile a Jew's feet. The Rabbis even went so far in their contradictory utterances, as to say that the victuals of the Cuthites were allowed, if none of their wine or vinegar were mixed with them, and even their unleavened bread was to be reckoned fit for use at the Passover. Opinions thus wavered, but, as a rule, harsher feeling prevailed.

Jesus was infinitely above such unworthy strifes and prejudices, and His disciples had caught something of His calm elevation, for they had already set off to the city for food, when He spoke to the

woman. She could only, in her wonder, ask, in reply, "How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, who am a Samaritan woman?" Her frankness and kindly bearing had its reward. With His wondrous skill in using even the smallest and commonest trifles to lead to the highest and worthiest truths, He lifts her thoughts to matters infinitely above the mere wants of the body. By an easy transition, He tells her of living water, the gift of God, which He has to give,—so precious, that, if she knew what it was, and who He was who spoke with her, she, in her turn, would ask Him to allow her to drink. He meant, of course, the divine grace and truth given by Him to those who sought it, the true living water, ever fresh in its quickening power, and efficacy to satisfy the thirst of the soul. Such a metaphor was exactly fitted to arrest her attention, but, like Nicodemus, she rises no higher than the literal sense. "You cannot mean the water in the well here," says she: "you cannot give me that, for you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Whence, then, can you get this living water of which you speak? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well? It was good enough for him and his to drink from, and you speak as if you had other and better!" Samaritan tradition had traced the well to the gift of Jacob, though it is not mentioned in Genesis; and Jacob —to a Samaritan, as to a Jew—was almost more than a man. Her curiosity was now fairly roused, and her willingness to hear was evident. "This water is, no doubt, good," replied Jesus, "but any one who drinks it will thirst again, whereas he who drinks the water that I give will never thirst, but will find it like a well of water in his soul, springing up into everlasting life." More and more interested, the woman craves some of this miraculous water, that she may not thirst, nor need to come all the way thither to draw. She still thinks only of common water.

But now followed a question which, while, apparently, of no moment, showed her that she was before one who knew the secrets of her life, and, while it woke a sense of guilt, opened the way for penitence. "Go, call thy husband." She answered that she had none. "You are right," replied Jesus, "for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband." The five had either divorced her for immorality, or were dead: to the sixth she was not married.

The light, half-bold mood of the woman was now entirely past. "My lord," said she, "I behold that Thou art a prophet," and, doubtless, the conviction flashed with it through her breast the kindred thought, that the Jewish religion, which He seemed to represent, must be the true one. Then, perhaps half wishing to turn the conversation—with a glance at the holy hill, towering eight hundred feet above them—she added, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."

To the Samaritans, Gerizim was the most sacred spot on earth. It was their sacred mountain, and had been, as they believed, the seat of Paradise, while all the streams that water the earth were supposed to flow from it. Adam had been formed of its dust, and had lived on it. The few Samaritans still surviving, shôw, even at this day, the spot on which he built his first altar, and that on which, afterwards, the altar of Seth, also, was raised. They fancied that Gerizim was Ararat, fifteen cubits higher than the next highest and next holiest mountain on earth—Mount Ebal, and that it was the one pure and sacred spot in the world, which, having risen above the waters of the flood, no corpse had defiled. Every Samaritan child of the neighbourhood could point out the places on it where Noah came out from the ark, and where he built his altar, and show the seven altar steps, on each of which Noah offered a sacrifice. The altar on which Abraham bound Isaac, and the spot where the ram was caught in the thicket, were amongst its wonders. In the centre of the summit was the broad stone on which Jacob rested his head when he saw the mystic ladder, and, near it, the spot where Joshua built the first altar in the land, after its conquest, and the twelve stones he set up, on the under side of which, they believed, the Law of Moses had been written. On this sacred ground their Temple had stood for two hundred years, till destroyed by the Jews a hundred and twenty-nine years before Christ. Towards Gerizim every Samaritan turned his face when he prayed, and it was believed the Messiah would first appear on its top, to bring from their hiding-place in it the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle of Moses. It was unspeakably sacred to the nation, as the one spot on earth where man was nearest his Maker. The simple Samaritan woman, with whom Jesus talked, had been trained up in the undoubting belief of all these legends, and her very mention of Jerusalem, respectfully, as a place sacred in the eyes of the Jew, showed a spirit ready to be taught.

She was only a humble woman, and withal, of poor antecedents, but it was the characteristic of Jesus to recognize the better self, even in the outcast and lost. The hope and joy of the triumphant future of His kingdom rose in His soul as He discoursed with her. No narrow intolerance had place in His breast; no haughty Jewish nationality prejudiced Him against man as man. Away from the close stifling bigotry, and fierce self-righteousness of Judea, He breathed more freely. To the Samaritans He always seems to have felt kindly, for it is a Samaritan whom He chose to illustrate the law of neighbourly love in His immortal parable; it was a Samaritan who, alone, of the ten lepers He healed, returned to give glory to God; and, now, it was a Samaritan woman who, by opening her heart to His words, first cheered His spirit, after the cold unbelief of Judea. The influences of the spot, moreover, had, doubtless, their effect on one so much in communion with nature. The towering hills on each side—steep—well-nigh precipitous, and, as seen from the well where

He sat, naked and sterile; the undulating valley between them, with its bubbling brook; the busy and prosperous Shechem, embowered in gardens and orchards; the great plain, ten miles in length and half as broad, outside, with its cornfields, vineyards, and olive groves, spread far and near; the framework of hills enclosing it round; the whole flooded by the bright Eastern noon, must have touched His delicate sensibility, as they could not have affected duller natures. The very associations of the scene must have breathed a sacred inspiration, for, here, Jacob had wandered; for the very ground on which this well had been dug, he had paid a hundred pieces of money; and here, Joseph, his famous son, lay buried, within the bounds of his father's purchase. Here Joshua had gathered the tribes to hear the Law from the rounded hill-tops above, and Gideon, and a long roll of judges and kings, had made it the centre of their rule. The plain before Him had been the gathering place of the hosts of Israel, and now He, the greater Joshua, a mightier judge than Gideon, and the true "Prince of God," was about to summon the peaceful soldiers of the spiritual Israel to a loftier struggle than ever earth had seen—for Truth and God. A divine enthusiasm filled His soul, and the vision of the sacred future He came to inaugurate for man rose before Him, when the local, national, and transitory in religion, should have passed away before the universal, spiritual, and eternal. "Believe me," said He, "an hour comes, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship God without knowing Him—ignorantly. Your Temple, when it stood, was without a name; still worse, your forefathers, after a time, dedicated it to idols. You have rejected the prophets and all the Scriptures after Moses, and, thus, are not in living connection with the earlier history of the kingdom of God; have no intelligent knowledge of the advancing steps by which God has revealed Himself, but rest on dark traditions and fancies, natural in a people whose religion began with the worship of strange gods, along with Jehovah. We, Jews, worship that which our having received the Scriptures, has taught us to know. The Messiah and His salvation must come from among the Jews. They have cherished the firm, pure, and living hope of Him, revealed more and more fully in the prophets, and their Temple, which has always been sacred to Jehovah alone, has kept this hope ever before them. But, though the Jews be right, as against the Samaritans, in so far as relates to the past, both are on equal footing as to the far more glorious future. An hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeketh such as worship Him thus. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Words like these marked an epoch in the spiritual history of the world; a revolution in all previous ideas of the relation of man to his Maker. They are the proclamation of the essential equality of man before God, and show the loftiest superiority to innate human preju-

dice or narrowness. Christ speaks, not as a Jew, but as the Son of Man; the representative of the whole race. The bitter controversy between race and race is only touched, in passing, with a divine mildness. Rising high, not only above His own age, but even above the prejudices of all ages since, He gives mankind their charter of spiritual liberty for evermore. Jerusalem and Gerizim are only local and subordinate considerations. The worth of man's homage to God does not depend on the place where it is paid. The true worship has its temple in the inmost soul, in the spirit and heart. It is the life of the soul; it is communion with God; the inward espousal of our nature to truth. It is spiritual and moral, not outward and ritual, springing from the great truth, rightly apprehended, which Jesus had first uttered, that God is a Spirit. The revelation of this, in the wide application now given it, was the foundation of the New Religion of all Humanity. The isolation and exclusiveness of former creeds were swept away by it for ever. Religion was henceforth no tribal privilege jealously kept within the narrow bounds of mere nationality. The universal presence of a spiritual God made the whole world alike His shrine. The veil of the Temple was first rent at Jacob's Well, and He Who, till then, had, as men thought, dwelt only in the narrow limits of the chamber it shrouded, went forth thence, from that hour, to consecrate all the earth as one great Holy of Holies. Samaritans, Heathen, Jews, were, henceforth, proclaimed children of a common heavenly Father, and Jesus, when He, presently, claimed to be the Messiah, announced Himself as the SAVIOUR of the WORLD.

Perplexed to understand words so lofty, the simple-minded woman was fain to put off any attempt to solve them, till He came, for whom, in common with the Jews, she waited. She felt hardly convinced, and wished to leave the question about Gerizim and Jerusalem till the Great Prophet appeared. "I know that Messiah comes, who is called Christ; when He shall come, He will tell us all things." Even the Samaritans had their hopes of a great deliverer, expecting Him to restore the kingdom of Israel, and renew the worship at Mount Gerizim, but they thought of Him only as acting by human agencies for inferior ends.

Jesus was far from recognizing her as right in all she meant by such an answer, but she had shown a modest and docile spirit, such as He always loved. She had acknowledged Him as a prophet, had listened eagerly to His words, and shown how she hoped that the Messiah, when He came, would set the long controversy to rest. Her honest wish to know the truth; her interest in the standing of her people to God and the Law, and her anxious yearning for the coming of the Messiah, revealed a frame of mind fitted to receive further light. "You need not wait," said He, "I that speak unto thee am HE." The first great revelation of the Saviour was to humble shepherds. The first direct disclosure of Himself as the Messiah was to an humble Samaritan woman!

Meanwhile, the disciples had returned from the city, and wondered to find Him talking with a woman. The relations of the sexes, even in common life, were very narrow and suspicious among the Jews. That a woman should allow herself to be seen unveiled was held immodest, and for any woman to let herself be heard singing a song was almost unchaste. In Judea a bridegroom might be alone with his bride, for the first time, an hour before marriage, but in Galilee even this was thought unbecoming. Trades which brought the two sexes in any measure into contact were regarded with suspicion, and no unmarried person of either sex could be a teacher, lest the parents of the children might visit the school. In Rabbis especially, even to speak with a woman in public was held indecorous in the highest degree. "No one" (that is, no Rabbi), says the Talmud, "is to speak with a woman, even if she be his wife, in the public street." It was forbidden to greet a woman, or take any notice of her. "Six things," we are told, "are to be shunned by a Rabbi. He must not be seen in the street dripping with oil (which would imply vanity): he must not go out at night alone: he is not to wear patched shoes (which in certain cases would be carrying a burden, when it was unlawful to do so): he must not speak with a woman in a public place: he must shun all intercourse with common people (for, not knowing the Law, they might be 'unclean'): he must not take long steps (for that would show that he was not sunk in the study of the Law): and he must not walk erect (for that would betray pride)." Though higher in position and respect among the Jews than in other Eastern nations, woman, at the time of Christ, was treated as wholly inferior to man. "Let the words of the Law be burned," says Rabbi Eleazer, "rather than committed to women." "He who instructs his daughter in the Law," says the Talmud, "instructs her in folly." But He who came to raise mankind to spiritual freedom and moral purity, included woman, as well as man, in His grand philanthropy, and treated with silent contempt the prudery by which it was sought to humble the one sex to exalt the other. He was a teacher not for an age, but for all time, and woman owes her elevation to social equality with man to the lofty respect shown her by Jesus of Nazareth. To have the courage of one's opinions is rare, and it is rarer still to retain, with it, a modest humility, and simple worship of truth. With most of us it is, rather, supercilious contempt of inferior judgments than lowly homage to conviction. In Jesus alone is it found as an instinctive and never-failing characteristic, with no blemish or qualification of attendant weakness. He acts, at all times, as before God alone, and as if unconscious of the presence or opinions of man.

Strange as the incident must have seemed to the disciples, the awe and reverence which Jesus had already excited in their minds checked any expression of surprise. Meanwhile the woman, leaving her pitcher, hurried off to the city, to make known the presence of the

wonderful stranger, and urge as many as she could, to go to Him, and see if He were not the expected Messiah. In her absence, the disciples, once and again invited Jesus to take some refreshment. But His soul was too full of other thoughts, which drove away all sense of hunger. "I have food to eat," said He, "that ye know not of,"—words, which to their dull material range of mind, seemed only to refer to food brought in their absence. "My meat," said He, seeing their misconception, "is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Then, lifting His eyes, and looking up the stretching valley, or round the wide sweep of the plain, in both of which, doubtless, the busy peasants were scattering the seed for the harvest, then four months distant, He caught sight of a multitude coming, under the guidance of the woman, to hear His words. Fired at the sight, He went on,—"You say, 'After four months will come the harvest.' But I say, look yonder at the throng coming towards us. *They* are the noblest harvest, and their coming shows that you have not to wait to reap *it*, as they have to reap the seed now sowing, for their souls, like autumn fields, are already white for the sickle. And how rich the reward for you, my disciples, who will be the reapers! You will gather fruit, not like the harvest of earth, but fruit unto life eternal. You and I, the Sower and the reapers, may well rejoice together in the parts assigned us by God. Think of the final harvest home, when Heaven, the great garner, shall have the last sheaf carried thither! The sower and the reaper are indeed distinct, as the proverb has it, speaking of common life. I have prepared and sown the field; you shall, hereafter, do the labour that is needed as it grows, and reap the sheaves as they ripen. Your work will be real of its kind, but to break up the soil, and cast in the seed, is harder than to watch the rising green. I send you to enter on the fruit of my toil."

Judea had yielded no harvest, but the despised people of Shechem were better spiritual soil. There was no idle thronging around, as in Judea, in hopes of seeing miracles: none were asked, and none were wrought. The simpler and healthier natures, with which He here came in contact, were satisfied in many cases, by the words of the woman alone. Gathering to hear, His words deepened the convictions of those impressed already, and roused the hearts of others. At their request, two days were spent in teaching. To have stayed longer might, perhaps, have compromised the future, by raising Jewish prejudice. Meanwhile, the work, thus auspiciously begun, could not fail to spread. "We believe," said the new converts, after the two days' intercourse with Jesus, "not because of the woman's saying, for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is, indeed, the Saviour of the world." Jews might have acknowledged Him as the Messiah, but only Samaritans, with their far more generous conceptions of the Messianic Kingdom, could have thought of Him as the Saviour of mankind.

Thus, naturally, from the most indifferent trifle of daily life, had come the disclosure of the highest truths, as a legacy to all ages. The well of Jacob had become the seat of the Great Teacher, before whose words, then spoken to an humble woman of Samaria, the most embittered enmities of nations and religions will, one day, pass away.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OPENING OF THE MINISTRY IN GALILEE.

A NATURE like that of Jesus, as sensitive as strong, must have felt the pleasure which only first successes can give, at His hearty reception by the Samaritans. Rejected in Judea, He had found willing hearers in the despised people of Shechem. A nucleus of His kingdom had been formed, and it must, by its nature, spread from heart to heart. Intensely human in His sensibility, He now enjoyed the happiness He had called forth in others, as, before, He had been depressed by its absence. He neither expected nor desired noisy popularity, for He knew that His kingdom could grow only by the secret conviction of soul after soul.

Yet, in one sense, it was already complete in each new disciple, for each heart that received Him was a spot in which it was fully set up —its laws accepted, and the will and affections entirely His. To each new adherent He was more than king, for He reigned over their whole nature, with a majesty such as no other king could command. The highest bliss of each was to have no thought or wish apart from His, for in the measure of likeness to Him, lay their spiritual purity, peace, and joy. They felt that to become His disciples, was to anticipate the brightest hopes of the eternal world, for it was to have their bosoms filled with the light and love of God. Earth never saw such a king, or such a kingdom.

But He could not stay in Samaria. His work lay in Israel. No other people were so fitted for it, by the training of two thousand years, by cherished hopes, and by the possession of the oracles of God, the one grand treasure of eternal truth in the hands of man. They, alone, of all mankind realized the idea of a true kingdom of God; they, alone, were a-glow for its advent. Misconceptions removed, they were fitted above all other races, to be the apostles of the new religion, which, in reality, was only the completing and perfecting of the old.

After a stay of two days, therefore, at Shechem, or near it, Jesus went on northwards, towards Galilee. The road passes through Shechem, to Samaria, which lies on its hill, at three hours' distance, on the north-west. It was then in its glory, as Herod had left it; no longer the old Samaria, but the splendid Sebaste, named thus in compliment to Augustus. Its grand public buildings, its magnificent

temple, dedicated in blasphemous flattery of Augustus, its colonnades, triumphal arches, baths, and theatres, and its famous wall, twenty stadia in circuit, with its elaborate gates, enclosing the whole—were before Him as He passed on. At Engannim—the Fountain of Gardens—on the southern slope of the great plain of Esdraelon, He crossed the Samaritan border, and was once more in Galilee.

Avoiding Nazareth, with a wise instinct that a prophet had no honour in his own country, He continued His journey to Cana, across the green pastures and corn-fields of the plain of Battauf. He had, indeed, felt, before leaving Samaria, that a district where He had been familiarly known in His earlier life would be less disposed to receive Him than others in which He was a stranger, but this could only apply to the immediate bounds of Nazareth or Capernaum. On the other hand, the news of His popularity in Judea, and of His miracles and discourses in Jerusalem, had been carried back to Galilee, by pilgrims who had returned from the feast, and had, doubtless, secured Him a much better reception in the province at large than, as Himself a Galilæan, He would otherwise have found. But even had He felt that He would be rejected in Galilee as He had been in Judea, His homage to duty, and grand self-sacrifice to its demands, would have so much the more impelled Him to carry His great message thither. Personal feelings had no place in His soul. It would have been only one more, added to His life-long conflicts with human perversity and evil, to brave foreboded indifference and neglect, and offer even to those who slighted Him the proofs of His divine dignity and worth. The prophet had foretold that the Great Light of the Kingdom of God would shine in Galilee of the Gentiles, and amidst whatever humiliation and pain of heart in anticipated rejection, He, its King, would have gone thither to proclaim it, and honour the divine prediction.

The first return of Jesus to Galilee, from the Jordan, had been marked by the miracle at the wedding feast at Cana, as if to rouse the general mind, and now, His second return was proclaimed in the same way. He, perhaps, had gone to live for a time with the friends for whom He had turned the water into wine, or, it may be, He was a guest of Nathanael, as, in Capernaum, of Peter. His reception, as He passed on His way to Cana, had been cheering in the extreme, for the reports from the south had raised Him to an undefined greatness in the popular eyes. They had learned to be proud of Him as their countryman, when they found Him so famous elsewhere. That crowds had followed Him in Judea, secured Him favour, so far, among the multitude in the north. His return had risen to the dignity of a public event, and passed from lip to lip through the whole district.

It had thus speedily become known in Capernaum that He was once more in Cana, after His nine or ten months' absence from Galilee. His miraculous power over sickness and physical evil, as shown in Jerusalem, had become a subject of universal report, finding its way

even into the gilded seclusion of mansions and palaces. Among others, a high officer of the court of Herod Antipas, whose mansion was in Capernaum, had heard of the wonderful Teacher. We know how the miracles of Christ reached the ears of Antipas himself; that Manaen, his foster-brother, actually became an humble follower of Jesus, and that Johanna, the wife of Chondza, the house steward or manager of the private affairs of Antipas, was one of many devoted female disciples and friends, of the richer classes,—and can, thus, easily fancy how such a dignified official had learned respecting the new wonder-working Rabbi. The close heat of the borders of the Lake of Galilee, with their fringe of reeds and marsh, though then tempered by the shade of countless orchards, and wooded clumps, now wholly wanting, has in all ages induced a prevalence of fever, at certain seasons, and the malady had now seized his only son, who was still a child. He had been led to look on Jesus as a wonderful Healer, by the cures reported to have been wrought by Him, but he had not, apparently, thought of Him as more. Hearing of His arrival at Cana, the hope that He might save his son, instantly determined him to go thither and ask His aid. The child, he said, was at the point of death, would Jesus come down and heal him?

There was something in the poor man's bearing, however, that showed the superficial conception he had formed of Christ's character and work. Miracles, with Jesus, were only means to a higher end, credentials to enforce the reception of spiritual truth. That truth was its own witness, and had sufficed to win a ready homage from the despised people of Sychar. To be the Healer of souls, not of the body, was His great mission, but the nobleman had, as yet, no idea of Him except as a Hakim or Ropha, who had proved His power to overcome disease. He had been led to Him not by the report and acceptance of the great truths He taught: only the rumour of His miracles had created interest enough to pass through the land. That he was utterly unconscious of the spiritual death from which he himself needed to be rescued, touched the sympathy of Jesus. "How is it," asked He, in effect, "that you come to me only for outward healing, and believe on me only as a worker of signs and wonders? Have you no sense of sin: no craving for spiritual healing: no inner sympathy with the teaching of my life and words?" Without moral preparation in his own mind, the healing of his son might confirm belief in the power of the Healer; but would bring no spiritual reception of the truth, to heal the soul. Apparently repelling him for the moment, Jesus was, in fact, opening his eyes to the far greater blessings he might freely obtain. With royal bounty He wished to give the greater while He gave the less, for it was His wont, after needed reproof, to give more than had been asked. Meanwhile, the only thought of the parent's heart was his dying boy. "Sir, come down ere my child die." Jesus knew that he would believe if his son were healed, but wished to raise a higher moral frame, which

would do so from kindled sympathy with spiritual truth without such an outward ground. To believe His word, from its own internal evidence, showed higher faith than that which only followed miracles. It showed a recognition of the truth from interest in it: a sensibility of soul to what was pure and holy. But belief as the result of miracles was not discountenanced: it was only held inferior.

The nobleman had assumed that Jesus would go back with him to Capernaum, and heal the child, but he was before One to whose power distance offered no hindrance. With the easy, unaffected dignity of conscious superiority, he is told to "go his way; his son lived:" words few and simple, but enough to let him know that the Speaker had, on the instant, healed the child. Nor could he doubt it. To have spoken with Jesus assured him that he might believe His word. Forthwith he addressed himself to return.

It was about twenty miles from Cana to Capernaum, and the miracle had been wrought an hour after noon. Resting by the way, at early nightfall, as he well might on a road so insecure, he set out again next morning, but ere long met some of his own slaves, sent to tell him the good news that the boy was convalescent, and to prevent his bringing Jesus any further. "Your son," said they, "is not dead, but is getting better. The fever has left him." "When," asked the father, "did he begin to amend?" "Yesterday, about one o'clock the fever broke." It was the very time when Jesus had told him that the boy would live. What could he do but accept Him as what he now knew He claimed to be—the Messiah. "Himself believed and his whole house."

How long Jesus remained in Cana is not known, but that He was for a time unattended by the small band of disciples who had accompanied Him to the Passover, is certain. They had remained with Him, in Judea, and had returned with Him, through Sychar, to Galilee, but, after so long an absence from home, He had let them go back to the Lake of Galilee, to their occupations, till He should once more call them finally to His service.

He had retired to the north before the rising signs of opposition from the Pharisees, who had at last found means to get John imprisoned, by their intrigues with Antipas, and might, at any moment, have effected His own arrest. An interval of some months now elapsed, perhaps in stillness and privacy, the time not having yet come, for some reasons unknown to us, for His final and permanent entrance on His public work. His mother and the family had returned to Nazareth from their short stay at Capernaum, and, it is most probable, therefore, that He, once more, sought the seclusion of His early home, to await the decisive moment of His reappearance. The fate of the Baptist may have made it necessary to avoid for a time giving any pretext of political alarm to Herod by His at once taking John's place. That one so venerated had been thrown into the dungeons of Machaerus doubtless spread to the farthest valleys. Men

almost hoped that the mighty preacher would soften the heart even of Antipas, and, in any case, could not credit that a man so cowardly and politic would dare to take the life of the honoured prophet. This and that measure of the tyrant were attributed by the credulous multitude to John's influence. The whole country was agitated, day by day, by rumours respecting him.

Nor were other subjects of popular excitement wanting. In the autumn of that, or the year before, apparently at the Feast of Tabernacles, there had been a fierce struggle between the Roman garrison at Jerusalem and the pilgrims from Galilee, ever excitable and ready to fight. In the heat of the contest the soldiers from Antonia had pressed into the very courts of the Temple, and had hewn down the Galilæans at the great altar, beside their sacrifices, mingling their blood with that of the slain beasts. The sons of Judas the Galilæan, the famous leader of the Zealots in their first great insurrection against Rome, had, moreover, grown up to manhood in the neighbourhood of Jesus, and cherished in their own breasts, and kept alive among the people, their father's fierce scheme for the erection of the kingdom of God by the sword, a fatal inheritance for which they were one day, like Christ, to be crucified. The whole land heaved with religious fanaticism like an ever-threatening volcano. Above all the tumult of such a state of things, however, the imprisoned prophet was the one thought of the country. Laments over him, mingled, doubtless, with fierce mutterings, filled every market-place and every home. It was a sign of the glowing religious sensibility of the times, and a summons to Jesus to take up the great work thus interrupted. The tyrant in Perea had silenced the voice that had proclaimed the coming of the kingdom of God, but He, whose herald John had been, was at hand to take it up again, with grander emphasis, on a more commanding theatre. Isaiah, the son of Amoz, had once seen a vision of Jehovah in the Temple, and had recognized his summons as a prophet, when, amidst the chants of the Levites and the clouds of incense, and the blasts of the sacred trumpets, the house was filled with smoke, and the very earth seemed to tremble. The Spirit came on Amos, the shepherd, as he followed his flocks on the lonely pastures, when he thought how the Syrians had threshed Gilead with iron sledges, and how Tyre had sold the sons of Israel to Edom as slaves; and he seemed to hear Jehovah call to him from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem, and forsook his hills, to be a shepherd to Israel. The loud universal lamentations over John were such a final divine call to Jesus.

Finally leaving His early home, therefore, He bent His steps once more towards Capernaum, which was, henceforth, to become "His own city," and the centre of His future work. The prophet had, ages before, painted the joyous times that should efface the memory of the Assyrian invasion, and in the appearance of Christ in these regions, their full realization had now come. The land of Zebulon,

and the land of Naphtali; the country towards the Sea of Galilee; the districts beyond the Jordan; and Galilee of the Gentiles, in the far north, towards Tyre and Syria—the people that sat in darkness, —saw a great light, and to them that sat in the region and shadow of death, a light sprang up. Galilee was to be pre-eminently the scene of the ministry of Jesus, and it is curious that even the Rabbis, in their earliest traditions, express the belief that it would be that of the manifestation of the Messiah. To this day, Jews gather in Tiberias, one of their four holy cities, from all parts of the earth, to wait for the coming of the Messiah, or, at least, to be buried there, in expectation of His advent.

It would seem as if Jesus had, for a time, been alone. The country was densely peopled, and He may have passed on, slowly, from village to village, opening His mission. The burden of His preaching was the same as that of John's. "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent and believe in the Gospel." But though alike in form, the import of the words in the mouth of Jesus was very different from that of their earlier utterance by His herald. John had striven to reform Israel by demanding strict outward observances, as well as morals, but Jesus went deeper, and required a revolution of the will and affections, flowing from changed relations to God. He would have no new pieces on old garments; no new wine in old bottles, no religious reform on the basis of a compromise with formal Judaism. Israel had sunk into spiritual death, in spite of its zeal for the precepts of the Rabbis, and the letter of the Scriptures: its piety had degenerated largely into hypocritical affectation, and merely lip and outward assent to the requirements of God's law. Its mission to the great heathen world had become a failure. A wholly new principle was needed to take the place of the now decayed and obsolete dispensation of Moses: the principle of direct personal responsibility to God, and spiritual freedom, instead of priestly mediation, and theocratic slavery. The Baptist was, throughout, an upholder of the ceremonial law, and had no adequate conception of a purely spiritual religion. It was reserved to Jesus to teach that only a religious and moral new-birth of Israel and of humanity could avail. He was the first who founded a religion, not on external precepts, or on a priesthood, or on sacrificial rites, but in the living spirit; in individual personal conviction; in the free, loving surrender of the will to God, as the eternal Truth and Good: a religion which looked first, not at mere acts, but at what men were, and set no value on acts apart from the motive from which they sprang.

Hence, the call to repentance was addressed to all without exception. He recognized the difference between man and man, and acknowledged the existence of possible good even in the apparently hopeless. He spoke of the good and evil, the righteous and unrighteous, the just and unjust, those who had gone astray and those who had not; of the sound and the sick; of the pure and the impure; of

green trees and dry; of a good and an evil eye, and of good soil and bad. Surveying men, as a whole, with a calm and searching insight, He rejoiced in the light which shone in some souls, in the midst of darkness around and within them, and acknowledged its worth. No cold fear of compromise damped His ardour: frank joy and radiant hopefulness, that detected good with instinctive quickness, cheered His spirit to greater effort. It is, indeed, His glory that He led not only the humble and penitent, but the openly evil, to a higher and purer life.

Yet, though thus wide in His charity, He had a standard by which all men alike were pronounced sinful, and in need of repentance. In the highest sense, God alone was good. Tried by this awful test of comparison with Him, all men were "unclean," "corrupt," "dark," "blind," "lustful," "selfish," worldly in thought, word, and act, dry trees, dead and lost. All are pronounced in danger of the wrath of God. They may be more or less sinful in degree; but all alike must seek forgiveness; all must repent and be changed, or perish.

Thus, when comparing men with men, He recognized better and worse, but before God, and in relation to citizenship in His kingdom, He acknowledged no difference, but condemned all alike as sinners. Before the One who alone is pure and holy, He humbles all. He will suffer no empty pride in the presence of the Creator. In His sight no one is to be called good. All are guilty, and even the best need pardon. In this view of man He declared that He had not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. Even the best of men, though righteous before their fellows, are guilty before God. It is the unique characteristic of the teaching of Jesus, that while He distinctly proclaims the moral differences between man and man, He insists with supreme and unchangeable earnestness on the infinite moral distance and contrast between the creature and the Creator. All before Him are evil, or have evil in them. There may be good among the bad, but sin is not wanting even in the best. The repentance He preached was the child-like humility which has no claim to merit, but, conscious of its own weakness, resigns its will to the guidance of God, and seeks His forgiveness. It has already entered His Kingdom.

Nothing is told respecting the extent of this first northern missionary tour, beyond the incidental remark that it embraced the towns and villages thickly studded round the western shore of the Lake of Galilee. The fame of His doings at Jerusalem had everywhere preceded Him, and attracted large crowds wherever He came. As yet He was alone, for His early followers had returned to their calling of fishermen, at Bethsaida and Capernaum. Reaching this neighbourhood after a time, an incident occurred which once more drew them from their nets, and transformed them into future apostles.

Jesus had risen early in the morning, as is the custom with Orientals, and had gone out to the shore of the Lake, which was close at

band. The stillness of the morning promised temporary relief from the crowds who daily thronged Him, and a much needed interval for peaceful solitude. But there was, henceforth, no rest for the Son of Man. The people were already afoot, and had hurried out to the beach, in numbers, "to hear the Word of God," for they recognized Him as speaking with divine authority, like John, or one of the prophets. Unable to go on, and willing to feed these "sheep of the House of Israel," He turned towards two boats drawn up on the white beach; the fishermen having come ashore, after a fruitless night's labour, to wash and mend their nets. The one boat was that of His old disciples Peter and Andrew, the other, that of James and John, who, with their father Zebedee, and some hired men, were busy preparing for the next evening's venture. To meet again must have been as pleasant to their Master as themselves, and their lowly occupation must have lost its charm at the recollection of the time when they had shared His society. Entering into Peter's boat, and asking him to thrust out a little from the land, that He might have freedom to address the people, He sat down, as was usual with the Rabbis when they taught, and spoke to the crowd standing on the shore. The clear rippling water playing gently round the boat; the fields, and vineyards, and olive groves behind; the eager listeners, with their varied and picturesque Eastern dress; the wondrous Preacher; the calmness and delicious coolness of morning, and, over all, the cloudless Syrian sky, must have made the scene striking in the extreme.

The public addresses of the Rabbis were always very short, and so, doubtless, were those of Jesus. The people were soon dismissed, and wandered off, to discuss, as Jewish congregations always did, the sayings they had heard. But Jesus had received a service in the use of His strange pulpit, and wished to repay it, as only He could. Telling Peter, the steersman of the boat, to push off into the deep water, He bade him and his brother let down the net. It was a circular one, cast from the boat, and then dragged slowly behind, towards the shore. The fish in the Sea of Galilee must always have been very abundant, even when the fisheries were so active, for, at this day, their number can scarcely be conceived by those who have not been on the spot. The shoals frequently cover an acre of the surface, or even more, and the fish, as they slowly move along the surface, with their back fins just seen on the level of the water, are so crowded, that it looks, a short way off, like a heavy shower of rain. But Simon and his brother had had no success, though they had spent the night, when fishing is best, in fruitless efforts. There was no hesitation, however, in obeying the command, and they had hardly done so, when they swept into a shoal, and had to beckon to James and John, their partners, to come quickly, and save their net from breaking with the catch. Even then, however, the two boats were loaded to the water's edge, and seemed as if they would sink.

Peter, ever impulsive, could not restrain his feelings at such an in-

cident—so unexpected, so grateful. He who had wrought so great a wonder must have unknown and inconceivable powers, before which man, guilty as he feels himself, might well be afraid. Falling down at the feet of Jesus, he could only utter the words—"Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Nor were his companions less astonished at the miracle. But Jesus had a high purpose with these simple, open-hearted friends. They had shown their sympathy of spirit with Him already, and now He designed to attach them permanently to His service. "Fear not," said He, "come after me; from henceforth I will make you fishers of men. You catch the fish to their death; you will take men alive, to save them from death, and give them eternal life." It was enough. Words so apt had their effect. From that moment the four were His devoted followers. The rich gain they would have prized so highly, but an hour before, had lost its charm. Called to decide, there and then, as a proof of their fitness for discipleship, they forsook all, and followed Him at once.

The few who had first joined Christ, and by doing so had shown their fitness for His special intimacy and confidence, were thus, once more gathered round Him, and lived with Him henceforth, apparently in the same dwelling, on a closer and more tender footing than any He afterwards received. They had often heard Him speak of the kingdom of God; of the need of faith in Himself and of a sincere religious spirit, as the conditions of entering it, and they yearned for closer intercourse with Him, that they might learn more respecting it. Their instant obedience showed their devotion. All that had hitherto engaged their thoughts and care, their boats, their nets, their fishing gear, their daily toil for daily bread, were left behind. They placed themselves, henceforth, under the higher authority of God Himself; ready at any time to separate themselves even from their families, in the interest of the new Kingdom. Jesus had drawn them to Himself, as they were to draw others, not by craft or force, but by the power of His living words and the spirit of love. Their loyalty was free and spontaneous. The calm greatness of the character of Jesus shines out in such an unpretending beginning, as the germ and centre of a movement which is to revolutionize the world. But insignificant as it might seem, it was only so when judged by a human standard. Tainted by no selfishness, weak ambition, or love of power, the four simple, child-like, uncorrupted natures, touched with the love of Heavenly Truth, and eager to win others to embrace it, were living spiritual forces, destined by a law of nature to repeat themselves in ever wider circles, through successive generations.

The fishermen and sailors of the Lake of Galilee were a numerous and redoubted class, with something of the feeling of a clan. In the last Jewish war we find them, under the leadership of Jesus, son of Sapphias, seizing Tiberias, and burning and plundering the great palace of Antipas. Of the four who had now definitely cast in their

lot with Jesus, Peter and Andrew were apparently poor; James and John, in a better position. For the convenience of trade, both families had left the neighbouring town of Bethsaida, and had settled in Capernaum, one of the centres of the local fisheries, and of the occupations connected with them. Peter alone seems to have been married, and in his house Jesus henceforth found a home, as perhaps he had done on His former short stay.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

CAPERNAUM.

The final "call" addressed to Peter and his brother, and to James and John, at the Lake of Galilee, apparently insignificant as an event, proved to have been, in reality, one of the turning points in the history of the world. The "call" of Abraham had given the world, as an everlasting inheritance, the grand truth of a Living Personal God; that of Moses had created a nation, in which the active government of human affairs by one God was to be illustrated, and His will made known directly to mankind; but that of the poor Galilæan fishermen was the foundation of a society, for which all that had preceded it was only the preparation; a society in which all that was merely outward and temporary in the relations of God to man, should be laid aside, and all that was imperfect and material replaced by the perfect, spiritual, and abiding. The true theocracy, towards which mankind had been slowly advancing, through ages, had received its first overt establishment, when Peter heard, on his knees, the summons of Jesus to follow Him, and had, with the others, at once, from the heart, obeyed. Henceforth, it only remained to extend the kingdom thus founded, by winning the consciences of men to the same devotion, by the announcement of the Fatherhood of God; the need of seeking His favour by repentance; and faith in His divine Son, leading to a holy life, of which that of Jesus, as the Saviour-Messiah, was the realized ideal.

From the shores of the Lake, Christ went to the house of Peter, accepting his invitation to share his hospitality.

The little town itself, with its two or three thousand inhabitants, was surrounded by a wall, and lay partly along the shore; some of the houses close to the water; others with a garden between it and them. The black lava, or basalt, of which all were built, was universally whitewashed, so that the town was seen to fine effect, from a distance, through the green of its numerous trees and gardens. Peter's household consisted of his wife, and her mother—doubtless a widow—whom his kindly nature had brought to this second home, Andrew, his brother, and, now, of Jesus, his guest. James and John, likely, still lived with their father, in Capernaum, and the whole

four still followed their calling in the intervals of attending their new Master.

It appears to have been on a Friday that Jesus summoned Peter and his companions. The day passed, doubtless, in further work for the kingdom. As the sun set, the beginning of the Sabbath was announced by three blasts of a trumpet, from the roof of the spacious synagogue of the town, which the devout commandant of the garrison, though not a Jew, had built for the people. The first blast warned the peasants, in the far-stretching vineyards and gardens, to cease their toil; the second was the signal for the townsfolks to close their business for the week, and the third, for all to kindle the holy Sabbath light, which was to burn till the sacred day was past. It was the early spring, and the days were still short, for even in summer it is hardly morning twilight, in Palestine, at four, and the light is gone by eight. Jesus did not, however, go that night to Peter's house, but spent the hours in solitary devotion. We can fancy, from what is elsewhere told us, that the day closed while He still spoke to a listening crowd, under some palm-tree, or by the wayside. As the moon rose beyond the hills, on the other side of the Lake, He would dismiss His hearers, with words of comfort, and a greeting of peace, and then turn to the silent hills behind, to be alone with His Heavenly Father. On their lonely heights, the noise of men lay far beneath Him, and He could find rest, after the toils of the day. A wide panorama of land and water stretched away on all sides, in the white moonlight. He was Himself its centre, and gazed on it with inexpressible sympathy and emotion. We can imagine Him, spreading out His arms, as if to take it all to His heart, and then prostrating Himself, as it were with it, before God, to intercede for it with the Eternal; His brow touching the earth in lowly abasement, while He pleaded for man as His friend and brother, in words of infinite love and tenderness. "Rising, erelong, in strong emotion, it would seem as if He held up the world in His lifted hands, to offer it to His Father. He spoke, was silent, then spoke again. His prayer was holy inter-communion with God. At first low, and almost in a whisper, His voice gradually became loud and joyous, till it echoed back from the rocks around Him. Thus the night passed, till morning broke and found Him, once more prostrate as if overcome, in silent devotion, but the dawn of day was the signal for His rising, and passing down again to the abodes of men."

The morning service in the synagogue began at nine, and as the news of the great Rabbi being in the neighbourhood had spread, every one strove to attend, in hopes of seeing Him. Women came to it by back streets, as was required of them; the men, with slow Sabbath steps, gathered in great numbers. The elders had taken their seats, and the Reader had recited the Eighteen Prayers—the congregation answering with their Amen,—for though the prayers might be abridged on other days, they could not be shortened on the

Sabbath. The first lesson for the day followed, the people rising and turning reverently towards the Shrine, and chanting the words after the Reader. Another lesson then followed, and the Reader, at its close, called on Jesus, as a Rabbi present in the congregation, to speak from it to the people.

His words must have sounded strangely new and attractive, for, apart from their vividness and force, they spoke of matters of the most vital interest, which the Rabbis left wholly untouched. He had founded the kingdom of God, and now sought to build it up by realizing its conditions in the souls of men, who should each, forthwith, be living centres of influence on others. But a course so retired, and unknown to the world at large, as that which He followed, of speaking to modest assemblies in local synagogues, makes it easy to understand how His life might be overlooked by the public writers of the age. Yet, in the little world in which He moved, the noiseless words by which He carried on His work created an intense impression. He gave old truths an unwonted freshness of presentation, and added much that sounded entirely new, on His own authority, instead of confining Himself, like the Rabbis, to lifeless repetitions of traditional commonplaces, delivered with a dread of the least deviation or originality. They claimed no power to say a word of their own; He spoke with a startling independence. Their synagogue sermons, as we see in the Book of Jubilees, were a tiresome iteration of the minutest Rabbinical rules, with a serious importance which regarded them as the basis of all moral order. The kind, and quality of wood for the altar; the infinite details of the law of tithes; the moral deadliness of the use of blood; or the indispensableness of circumcision on the eighth day, were urged with passionate zeal as momentous and fundamental truths. The morality and religion of the age had sunk thus low, and hence, the fervid words of Jesus, stirring the depths of the heart, created profound excitement in Capernaum. Men were amazed at the phenomenon of novelty, in a religious sphere so unchangeably conservative as that of the synagogue. "New teaching," said one to the other, "and with authority—not like other Rabbis. They only repeat the old: this man takes on Him to speak without reference to the past." But if they were astonished at His teaching, they were still more so at the power which He revealed in connection with it. Among those who had gone to the synagogue that morning was an unhappy man, the victim of a calamity incident apparently to the age of Christ and the Apostles only. He was "possessed by a spirit of an unclean demon." Our utter ignorance of the spiritual world leaves the significance of such words a mystery, though the popular idea of the time is handed down by the Rabbis. An unclean demon, in the language of Christ's day, was an evil spirit that drove the person possessed, to haunt burial-places, and other spots most unclean in the eyes of Jews. There were men who affected the black art, pretending, like the witch of Endor, to raise the dead, and, for

that end, lodging in tombs, and macerating themselves with fasting, to secure the fuller aid and inspiration of such evil spirits; and others into whom the demons entered, driving them involuntarily to these dismal habitations. Both classes were regarded as under the power of this order of beings, but it is not told us to which of the two the person present in the synagogue belonged.

The service had gone on apparently without interruption, till Jesus began to speak. Then, however, a paroxysm seized the unhappy man. Rising in the midst of the congregation, a wild howl of demoniacal frenzy burst from him, that must have frozen the blood of all with horror. "Ha!" yelled the demon. "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, the Nazarene? Thou comest to destroy us! I know Thee, who Thou art, the Holy One of God!" Among the crowd Jesus alone remained calm. He would not have acknowledgment of His Messiahship from such a source. "Hold thy peace," said He, indignantly, "and come out of him." The spirit felt its Master, and that it must obey, but, demon to the last, threw the man down in the midst of the congregation, tearing him as it did so, and, then, with a wild howl, fled out of him. Nothing could have happened better fitted to impress the audience favourably towards Jesus. This new teaching, said they amongst themselves, is with authority. It carries its warrant with it.

So startling an incident had broken up the service for the time, and Jesus left, with His four disciples, and the rest of the congregation. But His day's work of mercy had only begun. Arriving at His modest home, he found the mother of Peter's wife struck down with a violent attack of the local fever for which Capernaum had so bad a notoriety. The quantity of marshy land in the neighbourhood, especially at the entrance of the Jordan into the Lake, has made fever of a very malignant type at times the characteristic of the locality, so that the physicians would not allow Josephus, when hurt by his horse sinking in the neighbouring marsh, to sleep even a single night in Capernaum, but hurried him on to Tarichæa. It was not to be thought that He who had just sent joy and healing into the heart of a stranger, would withhold His aid when a friend required it. The anxious relatives forthwith besought His help, but the gentlest hint would have sufficed. It mattered not that it was fever: He was forthwith in the chamber, bending over the sick woman, and rebuking the disease as if it had been an evil personality, He took her by the hand, doubtless with a look, and with words, which made her His for ever, and gently raising her, she found the fever gone and health and strength returned, so that she could prepare their midday meal for her household and their wondrous guest.

The strict laws of the Jewish Sabbath gave a few hours of rest to all, but the blast of the trumpet which announced its close was the signal for a renewal of the popular excitement, now increased by the rumour of a second miracle. With the setting of the sun it

was once more lawful to move beyond the two thousand paces of a Sabbath Day's journey, and to carry whatever burdens one pleased. Forthwith, began to gather from every street, and from the thickly sown towns and villages round, the strangest assemblage. The child led its blind father as near the enclosure of Simon's house as the throng permitted: the father came carrying the sick child; men bore the helpless in swinging hammocks; "all that had any sick, with whatever disease," brought them to the Great Healer. The whole town was in motion, and crowded before the house. What the sick of even a small town implied may be imagined. Fevers, convulsions, asthma, wasting consumption, swollen dropsy, shaking palsy, the deaf, the dumb, the brain-affected, and, besides all, "many that were possessed with devils," that last, worst, symptom of the despairing misery and dark confusion of the times.

Would He leave them as they were? They had taken it for granted that He would pity them, for was He not a Prophet of God, and was it not natural that, like Elijah or Elisha, the greatest of the prophets, the power of God might be present to heal those who were brought to Him? Already, moreover, His characteristics had won the confidence of the simple crowd. There must have been a mysterious sympathy and goodness in His looks, and words, and even in His bearing, that seemed to beckon the wretched to Him as their friend, and that conquered all uncorrupted hearts. It had drawn His disciples from the interests of gain, to follow Him in His poverty; it melted the woman that was a sinner into tears; it softened the hard nature of publicans; and drew hundreds of weary and heavy-laden to Him for rest. These who could, gathered wherever they might hope to find Him, and as it was this evening, those who could not come, had themselves carried into His presence. As many as could, strove to touch, if it were possible, even His clothes; others confessed aloud their sins, and owned that their illness was the punishment from God. One would not venture to ask Him to come to his house; another brought Him in that He might be, as it were, constrained to help. The blind cried out to Him from the road-side, and the woman of Canaan followed Him in spite of His hard words. When He came near, even those possessed felt His divine greatness. Trembling in every limb, they would fain have fled, but felt rooted to the spot, the evil spirits owning, in wild shrieks, the presence of one whose goodness was torment, and before whose will they must yield up their prey.

The sight of so much misery crowding for relief touched Jesus at once, and, ere long, He appeared at the open door, before the excited crowd. With a command, "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," a poor demoniac was presently in his right mind. The helpless lame stood up at the words "I say unto thee, Arise." The paralytic left his couch, at the sound of "Take up thy bed and walk." To some, He had a word of comfort, that dispelled alarm and drove off

its secret cause. "Be it to thee according to thy faith." "Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." "Be of good cheer, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee," was enough to turn sorrow and pain into joy and health. Erelong He had spoken to all some word of mercy. The blind left with their sight restored: the possessed thanked God for their restoration: the fever-stricken felt the glow of returning vigour; the dumb shouted His praises; and thus the strange crowd went off one by one, leaving the house once more in the silence of the night. No wonder the Evangelist saw in such an evening a fulfilment of the words of the prophet, "Himself took our infirmities and bore our diseases."

It was not, however, by popular excitement and mere outward healing that the kingdom of God was to be spread, but by the still and gentle influence of the Truth, working conviction in individual souls. The noisy crowd, the thronging numbers of diseased and suffering; the curiosity that ran after excitement, and the yearning for help which looked only to outward healing, troubled, and almost alarmed Him. He had come to found a Spiritual Society, of men changed in heart towards God, and filled with faith in Himself as its Head; and the merely external and mostly selfish notions of the multitude, could not escape His keen eyes. His divine love and pity sighed over the bodily and mental distress around. But, as a rule, the sufferers thought only of their outward misery, in melancholy ignorance of its secret source in their own sin and guilt before God, and had all their felt wants relieved when their bodily troubles were removed.

In one aspect, indeed, these miraculous cures furthered the great purpose of Jesus. They might prove no doctrine, for mere power could not establish moral and spiritual truth. Miracles might possibly be wrought by other influences than divine, and left religious teaching to stand on its own merits, for they appealed to the senses; not, like truth, to the soul. The display or overwhelming power might almost seem to endanger, rather than promote, the higher aim of Jesus, to win those whom He addressed. It awes and repels men to find themselves in the presence of forces which they can neither resist nor understand. In nature, untutored races tremble before powers which may be used to destroy them, and seek to win their favour by the flattery of worship, surrounding even human despotism with awful attributes, before which they cower in terror.

Jesus, however, could appeal to His miraculous powers as evidences of His divine mission, and often did so. Their value lay in the grandeur they added to His character. Even in the wilderness, He had refused to exert them, under any circumstances, either for His natural wants, or for His personal ends, and He adhered to this amazing self-restraint through His whole career. It was seen from the first, that His awful powers were uniformly beneficent; that He came, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them; that He used omnipotence to bless, but never to hurt. His words, His bearing, and

His looks of divine love and tenderness, doubtless predisposed men to expect this, and His uniform course soon confirmed it. They saw that nothing could disturb His absolute patience, or rouse Him to vindictiveness. They heard Him endure meekly the most contemptuous sneers, the bitterest criticism, and the most rancorous hostility. No one denied His miraculous powers, though some affected to call them demoniac, in direct contradiction to their habitual exercise for the holiest ends. But they were so invariably devoted to the good of others, and so entirely held in restraint, as regarded personal ends, that men came, erelong, to treat Him with the reckless boldness of hatred, notwithstanding such awful endowment.

Round one so transcendentally meek, self-interest found no motive for gathering. He who would do nothing with such possibilities, for Himself, could not be expected to do more for the personal ends of others. Hypocrisy had nothing to gain by seeking His favour. Only sincerity found Him attractive. But, on the other hand, with the uncorrupted and worthy, this characteristic gave Him unlimited moral elevation. No more sublime spectacle can be conceived than boundless power, kept in perfect control, for ends wholly unselfish and noble. Condescension wins admiration when it is only from man to man; when it showed itself in veiled omnipotence, ever ready to bless others, but never used on its own behalf, it became a divine ideal. Men saw Him clothed with power over disease, and even over death; able to cast forth spirits, or to still the sea, and yet accessible, full of sympathy, the lofty patriot, the tender friend, the patient counsellor; shedding tears, at times, from a full heart, and ever ready with a wise and gentle word for all; so unaffected and gentle that children drew round Him with a natural instinct, and even worldly hardness and vice were softened before Him; and this contrast of transcendent power, and perfect humility, made them feel that He was indeed the Head of the Kingdom of God amongst men. The secret of His amazing success, as the founder of a new religious constitution for mankind, lay in the recognition of this perfect sacrifice of one so transcendentally great, culminating in "the death of the cross." It was the perfect realization, in Himself, of the life He urged on others. It implied the ideal fulfilment of all human duties, and no less so, of all divine, for the heavenly love which alone could dictate and sustain such a career, was, in itself, the most perfect transcript of the nature of God. A life in which every step showed kingly grace and divinely boundless love, condescending to the lowliest self-denial for the good of man, proclaimed Him the rightful Head of the New Kingdom of God.

The night which followed this busy and eventful Sabbath brought no repose to His body or mind. The excitement around agitated and disturbed Him. It was His first triumphant success, for, in the south, He had met with little sympathy, though He had attracted crowds. But curiosity was not progress, and excitement was not

conversion. Lowliness and concealment, not noisy throngs, were the true conditions of His work, and of its firmest establishment, and lasting glory. Mere popularity was, moreover, a renewed temptation, for, as a man, He was susceptible of the same seductions as His brethren. He might be drawn aside to think of Himself, and to His holy soul the faintest approach to this was a surrender to evil. Rising from His couch, therefore, while the deep darkness which precedes the dawn still rested on hill and valley, He left the house so quietly that no one heard Him, and went, once more, to the solitudes of the hills behind the town. Passing through groves of palms, and orchards of fig and olive trees, intermixed with vineyards and grassy meadows, with their tinkling brooks, so delightful in the East, and their unseen glory of lilies and varied flowers, He soon reached the heights, amongst which, at no great distance from the town, were lonely ravines where He could enjoy perfect seclusion. In the stillness of nature He was alone with His Father, and far from the temptations which troubled the pure simplicity of His soul, and His lowly meekness before God and man. We, now, see the glory of the path He chose, but while He lived, even His disciples would have planned a very different course. Why not take advantage of the excitement of the people to rouse the whole nation, as John had done? Was not His miraculous power a means of endless benefit to men, and should it not, therefore, be made the great feature of His work? Vanity would have suggested plausible grounds for His using His gifts in a way, that, in reality, was not in harmony with the great end of His mission. But His soul remained unsullied, like the stainless light. He came to do the will of His Father, and nothing could make Him for a moment think of Himself. In lonely communion with His own soul, and earnest prayer, the rising breath of temptation passed once more away.

Peter and Andrew, finding Him gone when they awoke, were at a loss what to think. More sick persons were gathering, and the crowds of yesterday promised to be larger to-day. Hasting to the hills, to which they rightly supposed He had retired, and having found Him at last, they fancied He would at once return with them, on hearing that the whole people were seeking Him. But He had a wider sphere than Capernaum, and higher duties than mere bodily healing. "I have not come to heal the sick," said He, "but to announce and spread the kingdom of God. All I do is subordinate to this. Let us, therefore, go to the neighbouring towns, for I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities, as well as to Capernaum." Nor would He be persuaded to return for a time, though some of the people had already found out His retreat, and joined with the disciples in begging Him to do so.

The circuit now begun was the first of a series, in which Jesus visited every part of Galilee, preaching and teaching in the synagogue of each town that had one, and often, doubtless, in the open air. It was the bright and sunny time of the year, when the harvest was quickly

ripening. The heat was already oppressive at noon, but the mornings and evenings permitted more easy travelling. It was a time of intense labour for the Saviour, of which the day's work in Capernaum was only a sample. The bounds of Galilee embraced the many villages and towns of the Plain of Esdraelon, and the whole of the hilly country north of it, almost to Lebanon. Day by day brought its march from one village or town to others, over the thirsty limestone uplands, where the wanderer thankfully received the cup of cold water, as a gift to be recompensed in the kingdom of God, or through glowing vineyards, or among the corn-fields whitening to the harvest, or falling under the sickle of the reaper. "Every day," said Jesus to His disciples, "has its own troubles;" for weariness; possibly, at times, hunger; the dependence on hospitality for shelter; the pressure of crowds; the stolid indifference of too many; the idle curiosity of more; the ever-present misery of disease in all its forms; and, it may be, even thus early, the opposition of some, must have borne heavily on a nature like His. The news of His miracles had spread like running fire through the whole country, and attracted crowds from all parts. Beyond Palestine, on the north, they had become the common talk of Syria; on the east, they had stirred the population of the wide district of the ten cities, and of Perea, and, on the south, His name was on all lips in Jerusalem and Judea. Erelong, it seemed as if the scenes of John's preaching were returning, for numbers gathered to Him from all these parts, and followed Him, day by day, in His movements through the land. His progress was, indeed, worthy of such an attendance, for no king ever celebrated such a triumph. Conquerors returning from victory over kingdoms and empires had led trains of trembling captives in their train. But, at every resting-place, a sad crowd of sufferers from all diseases and painful affections, and of demoniacs, lunatics, and paralytics, was gathered in the path of Jesus, and He healed them by a word or a touch. Escorted into each town by those whom He had thus restored—the lately sick and dying whom He had instantaneously cured,—it is no wonder that the whole land rang with the story. The enemies over whom He triumphed were pain, and sickness, and death, and the rejoicings that greeted Him were shouts of gratitude and blessing as the Prince of Life.

Only one incident of this wondrous journey is recorded at any length. In one of the cities He visited, He was suddenly met by a man "full of leprosy," a disease at all times terrible, but aggravated, in the opinion of that day, by the belief that it was a direct "stroke of God," as a punishment for special sins. It began with little specks on the eyelids, and on the palms of the hand, and gradually spread over different parts of the body, bleaching the hair white wherever it showed itself, crusting the affected parts with shining scales, and causing swellings and sores. From the skin it slowly ate its way through the tissues, to the bones and joints and even to the marrow,

rotting the whole body piecemeal. The lungs, the organs of speech and hearing, and the eyes were attacked in turn, till, at last, consumption or dropsy brought welcome death. The dread of infection kept men aloof from the sufferer, and the Law proscribed him, as, above all men, unclean. The disease was hereditary to the fourth generation. No one thus afflicted could remain in a walled town, though he might live in a village. There were different varieties of leprosy, but all were dreaded as the saddest calamity of life. The leper was required to rend his outer garment, to go bareheaded, and to cover his mouth so as to hide his beard, as was done in lamentation for the dead. He had, further, to warn passers by away from him by the cry of "Unclean, unclean;" not without the thought that the sound would call forth a prayer for the sufferer, and less from the fear of infection, than to prevent contact with one thus visited by God, and unclean. He could not speak to any one, or receive or return a salutation. In the lapse of ages, however, these rules had been in some degree relaxed. A leper might live in an open village, with any one willing to receive him and to become unclean for his sake, and he might even enter the synagogue, if he had a part specially partitioned off for himself, and was the first to enter the building, and the last to leave. He even at times ventured to enter a town, though forbidden under the penalty of forty stripes. But it was a living death, in the slow advance of which a man became daily more loathsome to himself, and even to his dearest friends. "These four are counted as dead," says the Talmud, "the blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless."

The news of the wondrous cures wrought on so many had reached the unfortunate man, who now dared the Law, to make his way to the healer. Falling at His feet in humble reverence, he delighted the spirit of Jesus by, perhaps, the first open confession of a simple and lowly faith—"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." His kneeling before Him, and addressing Him by such a title, was, indeed, only what he would have done to any one greatly above him, but his frank belief in His power, and his implicit submission to His will, touched a heart so tender. Moved with compassion for the unfortunate, there was no delay—a touch of the hand, and the words, "I will: be thou clean," and he rose, a leper no longer. To have touched him, was, in the eyes of a Jew, to have made Himself unclean, but He had come to break through the deadly externalism that had taken the place of true religion, and could have shown no more strikingly how He looked on mere Rabbinical precepts than by making a touch which, till then, had entailed the worst uncleanness, the means of cleansing. Slight though it seemed, the touch of the leper was the proclamation that Judaism was abrogated henceforth.

The popular excitement had already extended widely, and a cure like this was certain to raise it still higher. With the Baptist in prison on a pretended political charge, and the people full of political

dreams in connection with the expected Messiah, all that might fan the flame was to be dreaded. Excitement, moreover, was unfavourable to the great work of Jesus. He needed a thoughtful calm in the mind, for lasting effects. The kingdom of God which He proclaimed was no mere appeal to the feelings, but sought the understanding and heart. Turning to the newly cured, therefore, He spoke earnestly to him, not to tell any one what had happened, threatening him with His anger, if he should disobey. "Go to Jerusalem," said He, "and show yourself to the priest, and make the offerings for your cleansing, required by the Law, as a proof to your neighbours, to the priests, the scribes, and the people at large, that you are really clean."

A certificate of the recovery of a leper could only be given at Jerusalem, by a priest, after a lengthened examination, and tedious rites, and, no doubt, these were duly undergone and performed. It will illustrate the "bondage" of the ceremonial law, as then in force, to describe them. With his heart full of the first joy of a cure so amazing, for no one had ever before heard of the recovery of a man "full of leprosy," he set off to the Temple for the requisite papers to authorize his return, once more, to the roll of Israel. A tent had to be pitched outside the city, and in this the priest examined the leper, cutting off all his hair with the utmost care, for if only two hairs were left, the ceremony was invalid. Two sparrows had to be brought at this first stage of the cleansing; the one, to be killed over a small earthen pan of water, into which its blood must drop: the other, after being sprinkled with the blood of its mate,—a cedar twig, to which scarlet wool and a piece of hyssop were bound, being used to do so,—was let free in such a direction that it should fly to the open country. After the scrutiny by the priest, the leper put on clean clothes, and carried away those he had worn to a running stream, to wash them thoroughly, and to cleanse himself by a bath. He could now enter the city, but for seven days more could not enter his own house. On the eighth day after, he once more submitted to the scissors of the priest, who cut off whatever hair might have grown in the interval. Then followed a second bath, and now he had only carefully to avoid any defilement, so as to be fit to attend in the Temple next morning, and complete his cleansing. The first step in this final purification was to offer three lambs, two males and a female, none of which must be under a year old. Standing at the outer edge of the court of the men, which he was not yet worthy to enter, the leper waited the longed-for rites. These began by the priest taking one of the male lambs destined to be slain as an atonement for the leper, and leading it to each point of the compass in turn, and by his swinging a vessel of oil on all sides, in the same way, as if to present both to the universally present God. He then led the lamb to the leper, who laid his hands on its head, and gave it over as a sacrifice for his guilt, which he now confessed. It was forthwith killed at the north side of the altar, two priests catching its blood, the one in a vessel, the

other in his hand. The first now sprinkled the altar with the blood, while the other went to the leper and anointed his ears, his right thumb, and his right toe with it. The one priest then poured some oil of the leper's offering into the left hand of the other, who, in his turn, dipped his finger seven times into the oil thus held, and sprinkled it as often towards the Holy of Holies. Each part of the leper which before had been touched with the blood, was then further anointed with the oil, what remained being stroked on his head.

The leper could now enter the men's court, and did so, passing through it to that of the priests. The female lamb was next killed, as a sin-offering, after he had put his hands on its head, part of its blood being smeared on the horns of the altar, while the rest was poured out at the altar base. The other male lamb was then slain for a burnt sacrifice: the leper once more laying his hands on its head, and the priest sprinkling its blood on the altar. The fat, and all that was fit for an offering, was now laid on the altar, and burned as a "sweet-smelling savour" to God. A meat-offering of fine wheat meal and oil ended the whole; a portion being laid on the altar, while the rest, with the two lambs, of which only a small part had been burned, formed the dues of the priest. It was not till all this had been done that the full ceremony of cleansing, or showing himself to the priest, had been carried out, and that the cheering words, "Thou art pure," restored the sufferer once more to the rights of citizenship and of intercourse with men. No wonder that even a man like St. Peter, so tenderly minded to his ancestral religion, should speak of its requirements as a yoke which "neither our fathers nor we are able to bear."

Of the after-history of the leper thus cleansed we are not informed. It appears, however, that his joy at being healed was too great to be repressed even by Christ's grave imposition of silence. The multitudes around Jesus would soon, of themselves, spread news of the miracle, but the healed man widened and heightened the excitement by telling everywhere on his road to Jerusalem what had befallen him. The result was that Jesus could no longer enter a town or city, so great was the commotion His presence excited. Nor was it of any avail that He retired to the open country, for even when He betook Himself to the upland solitudes, great multitudes continually sought Him out, either to hear His words, or to be healed of their various diseases.

In such busy and exhausting scenes the days of early autumn passed. But, whatever the returning toils of each morning, the Saviour still craved and secured hours of lonely calm, for we read in St. Luke that, during all these weeks, He was wont to withdraw, doubtless by night, into lonely places to pray.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

THE cure of the leper seems to have resulted in Jesus returning, for a moment, to Capernaum. He had acted with the greatest caution during His mission, to avoid giving offence, and thus raising opposition, which would be fatal at the very opening of His ministry. From many a hill-top on His journeyings, He and His disciples had, doubtless, often looked to the mountains in the south-east, amidst which John lay, a helpless prisoner; and they must have felt that the prince who had thus cut short the work of the great Reformer, might be readily moved to the same violence towards themselves. Jesus had, therefore, shunned notoriety; and though He never hesitated to accept homage, where it was sincere and spontaneous, He had never demanded it, and had kept even His miraculous powers in strict subordination to the great work of proclaiming the advent of the kingdom of God. The appeals of pain and misery had, indeed, constrained Him to relieve them, but He had accompanied His miracles by a strict prohibition of their being made publicly known, further than was inevitable.

In spite of every precaution, however, the report of His wonderful doings spread far and wide, and drew ever increasing attention. Political circles, as yet, did not condescend to notice Him, but the sleepless eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities were already watching Him. It was enough that He acted independently of them. Not to be with them was, in their eyes, to be against them, for they claimed, as the spiritual leaders of the nation, the sole direction of its religious teaching. The more wonderful His works, the greater their excitement, and the keener their jealousy. In any case, therefore, the words which accompanied such extraordinary manifestations, would have been watched with the closest scrutiny, for any chance of vindicating their care of the religious interests entrusted to them. In an age of such rigid literalism and unchanging conservatism, no teacher with the least individuality of thought or expression could hope to escape, where the determination to condemn was already fixed. Far less was it possible for one like Jesus—so sincere amidst general insincerity; so intense and real amidst what was hollow and outward; so pure and elevated amidst what was gross and worldly; so tenderly human, amidst what was harsh and exclusive—to avoid giving pretext for censure. The priests and Rabbis, through the whole land, felt instinctively that their influence was imperilled by His lightest word. They, already, were coldly suspicious. The next step would be to blame, and they would seek, before long, to destroy Him, for it has, in all ages, been the sad characteristic of the leaders of demi-

nant religious parties, to confound the gratification of the worst passions with loyalty to their office.

Perhaps Jesus had hoped that in Capernaum, at least, He would find an interval of repose, for His absence might have been expected to have allayed the excitement. No spot in Palestine seemed less likely to be disturbed by the hostility of the schools. In Jerusalem, men looked back to a past dating from Melchisedek, and were its slaves, but Capernaum was so new that its name does not occur at all in the Old Testament. But He soon found that the dark and hateful genius of Rabbinism, with its puerile customs and formulas, and its fierce bigotry, was abroad through the whole land.

It was vain to expect that a "city set on a hill" could be hidden. He had scarcely re-entered the town, before it ran from mouth to mouth that He had returned, and was at home. Crowds presently gathered, and filled not only the house, but the space before it. There was to be no rest for the Son of Man, till He found it in the garden grave of Joseph of Arimathea. The applause, the gaping wonder, the huge concourse of people, were only a grief to Him. He had broken away from them before, and sought refuge from the temptations they tended to excite, in lonely prayer by night, on the neighbouring hills, under the pure and silent stars. They had followed Him on His journey from town to town, and, now, on His return to Capernaum, the clamour of voices, and the pressure of throngs, beset Him more than ever. Had anxiety to hear the truths of the new spiritual kingdom caused this excitement, it would have been healthy, but it had been already shown only too clearly that, while men believed in His power to heal, they cared little for His higher claims. Regret for bodily illness, or ready sympathy with the sufferers, simply as under physical trouble, were evidently the only thought, to the exclusion of any sense of graver spiritual disease in all alike. The very maladies often revealed moral impurity as their cause; and the selfish struggle for His favour, and the too frequent ingratitude of the cured, saddened His soul. Of the multitudes whom He had healed, most had disappeared, without any signs of having heeded His appeals and warnings. Even the leper, who had at least promised silence, was hardly out of His presence before he forgot his pledge. He was already the Man of Sorrows, but divine compassion still urged Him to heal.

To make the trial greater, it was evident that mischief was brewing. The Rabbis were astir. They had heard of the multitudes attracted from the other side of the Jordan on the east; from as far as Jerusalem, and even Idumea, on the south, and from Phenicia on the north; and had followed the crowds, and gathered in Capernaum from every town of Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem itself, to hear and see the new wonder. Sensitive in their own interest, they came with no friendly motive, but cold and hostile; to criticize, and, if possible, to condemn.

Even in Galilee the influence of the order was great. It had done immense service to the nation in earlier days in kindling an intense feeling of nationality, and an enthusiasm, at first healthy and beneficial, though now perverted, for their faith. The Rabbis were the heads of the nation, in the widest sense, for the religion of the people was also their politics. They were the theologians, the jurists, the legislators, the politicians, and, indeed, the soul of Israel. The priests had sunk to a subordinate place in the public regard. The veneration which the people felt for their Law was willingly extended to its teachers. They were greeted reverently in the street and in the market-place, men rising up before them as they passed; the title of Rabbi was universally accorded them; the front seats of the synagogues were set apart for them; and they took the place of honour at all family rejoicings, that they might discourse, incidentally, to the company, on the Law. Wise in their generation, they fostered this homage by external aids. Their long robes, their broad phylacteries, or prayer fillets, on their forehead and arm, their conspicuous Tephillin, with the sacred tassels dangling from each corner, were part of themselves, without which they were never seen. The people gloried in them as the crown of Israel, and its distinguishing honour above all other nations. "Learn where is wisdom," says Baruch, "where is strength, where is understanding. It has not been heard of in Car ian, nor seen in Teman. The Hagarenes seek wisdom, and the traders of Meran and Teman, and the poets and philosophers, but they have not found out the way of wisdom, or discovered her path. God has found out the whole way of wisdom, and hath given it to His servant Jacob, and to Israel, His beloved." Jerusalem was, naturally, while the Temple worship continued, the headquarters of the wisdom of the Rabbis, but they were found in all the synagogue towns both of Judea and Galilee. They formed the members of the local, ecclesiastical, and criminal courts over the country, and at Jerusalem, virtually controlled the authorities, and thus framed the religious and general law for the nation at large, so far as allowed by the Romans. Their activity never rested. Whether as guests from the Holy City, or as residents, they pervaded the land, visiting every school and synagogue, to extend their influence by teaching and exhortations. A Rabbi, indeed, could move from place to place with little trouble, for, in most cases, he lived by trade or handicraft, and could thus unite business and religion in his missionary journeys. Their ceaseless circuits are painted in the Targum on Deborah's song. It makes the prophetess say—"I am sent to praise the Scribes of Israel, who ceased not, in the evil times, to expound the Law. It was beautiful to see how they sat in the synagogues, and taught the people the words of the Law; how they uttered the blessings, and confessed the truth before God. They neglected their own affairs, and rode on asses round the whole land, and sat for judgment." The paraphrase is an anachronism when applied to the age of the Judges, but it vividly illustrates Rabbinical zeal in the days of Christ.

Soon after His return to Capernaum, an incident occurred which led to the first open difference between Jesus and this all-powerful order. The crowds had gathered in such numbers at Peter's house, that not only the house itself, but the space before it, was once more full. Among the audience were Scribes from all parts, to see if they should unite with the new movement, and turn it to their own purposes, or take measures against it. If we may judge from the ruins on the site of the town, the house was only a single very low story high, with a flat roof, reached by a stairway from the yard or court, and Jesus may have stood near the door, in such a position as to be able to address the crowd outside, as well as those in the chamber. Possibly, however, there were two stories in this particular house, as there must have been in some in the town, and in that case the upper one would likely be a large room—the "upper" and best chamber—such as was often used elsewhere by Rabbis, for reading and expounding the Law to their disciples, and Jesus may have have stood near the open window, so as to be heard both outside and within.

From some favourable spot He was addressing the thickly crowded audience about the kingdom of God, so long prophesied, and now, at last, in their midst, when four men approached bearing a sick person, on a hammock slung between them. It proved to be a man entirely paralyzed. Unable to make their way through the throng, the bearers went round the house to see what should be done. They had likely come from a distance, and thus were too late to get at once near the great Healer. The outside stairs to the roof, however, offered them a solution of their difficulty. The sick man was bent on getting to the feet of Jesus, and willingly let them raise him, which they were able to do by fastening cords to the hammock, and pulling it up, after they themselves had got to the top by the narrow and ladder-like steps.

Their trembling burden once safely on the roof, the rest was easy. Eastern houses are, in many ways, very different from ours, but in none more strikingly than in the lightness of the roof. Rafters are laid on the top of the side walls, about three feet apart, and on these short sticks are put, till the whole space is covered. Over these, again, a thick coating of brushwood, or of some common bush, is spread. A coat of mortar comes next, burying and levelling all beneath it, and on this again is spread marl or earth, which is rolled flat and hard. Many roofs, indeed, are much slighter—earth closely rolled or beaten down, perhaps mixed with ashes, lime, and chopped straw,—being all the owners can afford, and thus, even at this day, it is common to see grass growing on the house-top after the rains, and repairs of cracks made by the sun's rays are often needed in the hot season, to prevent heavy leakage. It is thus easy to break up a roof when necessary, and it is often done. The earth is merely scraped back from a part, and the thorns and short sticks removed, till an opening of the required size is made.

Through some such simple roofing the four bearers now opened a space large enough to let down the sick man into the chamber where Jesus stood. Cords tied to the couch made the rest easy, and the paralytic was presently at the feet of Jesus. He lay there, the living dead, but his outward troubles were not his greatest. Looking on his calamity as a punishment from God for past sins,—perhaps feeling that it had been brought upon him by a vicious life,—he was even more sorely stricken in spirit than in body. No one, he felt, could help him but He to reach whom had been his deepest wish. To be healed within, was even more with him than to be restored to outward health. He had nothing to say; perhaps he could not speak, for palsy often hinders articulation. But his eyes told his whole story, and He before whom he had thus strangely come read it at a glance. He was still a young man, which in itself awakened sympathy, but he had, besides, in his anxiety to get near, by whatever means, and the humility which sought cleansing from guilt more than restoration to health, shown a recognition of Christ's higher dignity as the dispenser of spiritual blessings. With an endearing word used by teachers to disciples, or by superiors in age or rank, Jesus flashed the light of hope on his troubled spirit. "My child," said He, "thy sins are forgiven thee."

It was a wondrous utterance, and must have sounded still more strangely, when thus first heard, than to us, who have been familiar with it from childhood. No one had ever heard Him admit, even by a passing word, His own sinfulness; He showed no humility before God as a sinner; never sought pardon at His hands. Yet no Rabbi approached Him in opposition to all that was wrong, for He went even beyond the act to the sinful desire. The standard He demanded was no less than the awful perfection of God. But those round Him heard Him now rise above any mere tacit assumption of this sinless purity by His setting Himself in open contrast to sinners, in His claim not only to announce the forgiveness of sins by God, but, Himself, to dispense it. He pardons the sins of the repentant creature before Him on His own authority, as a King, which it would be contradictory to have done had He Himself been conscious of having sin and guilt of His own. It was clear that He could have ventured on no such assumption of the prerogative of God, had He not felt in Himself an absolute harmony of spiritual nature with Him, so that He only uttered what He knew was the divine will. It was at once a proclamation of His own sinlessness, and of His kingly dignity as the Messiah, in whose hands had been placed the rule over the new theocracy.

The Rabbis felt, in a moment, all that such words implied. Their only idea of a religious teacher was that he should never venture a word on his own authority, but slavishly follow other earlier Rabbis. They had all the conservatism of lawyers. One Beth-din could not put aside the decision of another, unless it was superior in wisdom

and numbers, and how little likely it was that, even in such a case, any decision should be superseded, may be judged from the fact that for any one to dispute with a Rabbi or murmur against him, or to hesitate in accepting and obeying his every word, was no less a crime than to do the same towards God Himself. Even the people had caught the spirit of changeless conservatism from their teachers, for, when John Hyrcanus, with a kindly view to relieve them from an almost intolerable burden, ventured to prohibit some trifling Rabbinical rules of the Pharisees, his well-meant liberality, instead of gaining him favour, excited hatred against him as an intruder and innovator. The type of a strict Rabbi found its ideal in Schammäi, the rival of Hillel, and founder of the school which was most bitter against Jesus. It was not enough that he sought to make even young children fast through the whole day of Pardon: during the Feast of Tabernacles he had the roof taken from the room in which lay his daughter-in-law and her new-born son, to have a tent raised over them, that the baby might be able to keep the feast.

The lofty words of Jesus at once caught the ears of the lawyers on the watch. They sounded new, and to be new was to be dangerous. Nothing in Judaism had been left unfixed; every religious act, and indeed, every act whatever, must follow minutely prescribed rules. The Law knew no such form as an official forgiving of sins, or absolution. The leper might be pronounced clean by the priest, and a transgressor might present a sin-offering at the Temple, and transfer his guilt to it, by laying his hands on its head and owning his fault before God, and the blood sprinkled by the priest on the horns of the altar, and towards the Holy of Holies, was an atonement that "covered" his sins from the eyes of Jehovah, and pledged his forgiveness. But that forgiveness was the direct act of God; no human lips dared pronounce it. It was a special prerogative of the Almighty, and even should mortal man venture to declare it, he could only do so in the name of Jehovah, and by His immediate authorization. But Jesus had spoken in His own name. He had not hinted at being empowered by God to act for Him. The Scribes were greatly excited; whispers, ominous head-shakings, dark looks, and pious gesticulations of alarm, showed that they were ill at ease. "He should have sent him to the priest to present his sin-offering, and have it accepted: it is blasphemy to speak of forgiving sins, He is intruding on the divine rights." The blasphemer was to be put to death by stoning, his body hung on a tree, and then buried with shame. "Who can forgive sins but One, God?"

It was the turning-point in the life of Jesus, for the accusation of blasphemy, now muttered in the hearts of the Rabbis present, was the beginning of the process which ended, after a time, on Calvary; and He knew it. The genius of Rabbinism was in direct antagonism to that of His "new teaching." Christ required a change of heart; the Rabbis, instruction; He looked at the motive of an act; they, at

its strict accordance to legal forms; He contented Himself with implanting a principle of pure and loving obedience in the breast, which should make men a law to themselves: they taught that every detail of religious observance, from the cradle to the grave,—to the very smallest,—should be prescribed, and rigidly followed in every formal particular. He promised the Divine Spirit to aid His followers to a perfect obedience; the Rabbis enforced obedience by the terrors of the Church courts, which they controlled. Resting thus on wholly different conceptions; the Rabbi, self-satisfied in the observance of external rites and requirements; Jesus repudiating merit, and basing His kingdom on the willing service of humble and grateful love, the only question was how long, in an intolerant theocracy, active hostility might be averted. The lowly, wandering, Galilæan teacher, who despised long robes and phylacteries, and associated with the rude and ignorant, from whom the Rabbis shrank as accursed for not knowing the Rabbinical law; who had no license as teacher from any Beth-din; who had attended no Beth-ha-Midrasch, or Rabbis' School of the Law, and was thus a mere untrained layman, usurping clerical functions, was instinctively suspected and hated, though they could not affect to despise Him. The kingdom of God which He preached was, moreover, something new and irregular. In the words of Baruch, they expected that all who kept the Law in their sense, would, in return, have eternal life as a right, as indeed, one of their proverbs plainly put it,—"He who buys the words of the Law, buys everlasting life." Esteeming themselves blamelessly righteous, they not only despised others, but claimed Heaven, as the special favourites of God. It must, therefore, have been galling in the extreme, to hear Jesus demand humility and repentance, and faith in Himself, as the universal conditions of entrance into the new kingdom of God; to be confounded with the crowd on whom they looked as Brahmins on Sudras; and to be stripped of their boasting, and even of their hopes of future political glory, by the proclamation of a new and purely spiritual theocracy, in the place of the national restoration of which they dreamed, with themselves at its head. Only a spark was wanting to set their hostility ablaze, and this had now been supplied.

For the time they were helpless, in the presence of so much enthusiasm for Jesus, but this only increased their bitterness, on their finding that He had kept His eyes on them, and knew their thoughts. They were now still more confused by His openly asking them, "Why they were thinking evil in their hearts?" He had long felt that He could not hope to make any healthy impression on a class who affected to regard Him as half beside Himself on religious matters, and as one who had set Himself up as a Rabbi, and excited the people against their teachers. He knew that they put the worst construction on all He said, and were laying up matter for future open attack. But no passing thought of fear disturbed Him. He had come to witness to the truth, and at once accepted the challenge which their

hostile looks and bearings implied. Without waiting to be assailed, He suddenly asked them, "Which is easier? To say to this paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven, or to say, Rise, and take up thy bed and go?" There might be deception about the forgiveness, for no one could tell if the absolution were of any avail, but there could be none respecting the cure of a helpless living corpse. Turning to the bed without waiting an answer, He continued—in irresistible self-vindication—"That ye may know that the Son of Man has authority on the earth to forgive sins,—Rise, poor man, take up the mat on which you have been lying, and go home." It was enough; sensibility and power of motion returned to the helpless limbs; muscles and nerves lost their torpor; strength poured once more through the veins. Slowly, scarce realizing what it meant, he rose, little by little, his eyes fixed on his deliverer, till, at last, he stood erect before Him, to sink at His knees again in grateful adoration. But he could not be allowed to stay. Stepping back, without saying a word, Jesus, by a look, motioned him to retire, and lifting the mat, he did so, his eyes still fixed on his helper, as he made his way backward through the awe-stricken crowd.

The effect was electric. The Scribes were, for the time, discomfited. Amazement and fear mingled with religious awe. "We never saw it thus," cried some, while others, with true Eastern demonstrativeness, broke out into praise of God who had given such power to men. Meanwhile, Jesus glided out of the apartment, sad at heart, for the shadow of the cross had fallen on His soul.

A number of disciples must, by this time, have been gained in different parts, but the inner circle gathered by Jesus, as His personal followers, was as yet limited to the few whom He had first "called." Another was, now, however, to be added to their number. Capernaum, as a busy trading town, on the marches between the dominions of Philip and those of Antipas, and, from its being on the high road between Damascus and Ptolemais, had a strong staff of custom-house officers, or publicans, to use the common name. The traffic landed at Capernaum from across the Lake, or shipped from it, had to pay dues, and so had all that entered or left the town in other directions. There were tolls on the highways, and on the bridges, and at each place the humbler grades of publicans were required, while a few of a higher rank had charge of the aggregate receipts of the minor offices of the district. These officials were often freemen, or even slaves of the larger farmers of the local imposts; sometimes natives of the part, and even poor Roman citizens. The whole class, however, had a bad name for greed and exaction. So loud, indeed, and serious, did the remonstrances of the whole Roman world become at the tyranny and plunderings thus suffered, that, a generation later, Nero proposed to the Senate to do away with taxes altogether, though the idea resulted only in an official admission that the "greed of the publicans must be repressed, lest they should at last, by new

vexations, render the public burdens intolerable." The underlings, especially, sought to enrich themselves by grinding the people: and the checks they caused to commerce, the trouble they gave by reckless examination of goods, and by tedious delays; by false entries, and illegal duties; made them intensely hated. "Bears and lions," said a proverb, "might be the fiercest wild beasts in the forests, but publicans and informers were the worst in the cities." The Jews, who bore the Roman yoke with more impatience than any other nation, and shunned all contact with foreigners, excommunicated every Israelite who became a publican, and declared him incompetent to bear witness in their courts, and the disgrace extended to his whole family. Nobody was allowed to take alms from one, or to ask him to change money for them. They were even classed with highway robbers and murderers, or with harlots, heathen, and sinners. No strict Jew would eat, or even hold intercourse, with them.

With a supreme indifference to the prejudices of the day, Jesus resolved to receive one of this proscribed order into the inner group of His followers. With a wide and generous charity He refused to condemn a whole class. That they were outcasts from society was a special reason why He, the Son of Man, should seek to win them to a better life. He refused to admit anything wrong in paying tribute to Cæsar, and hence saw no sin in its collection. There was no necessity for a publican not being just and faithful, alike to the people and to the State, and He had seen for Himself that there were some against whom nothing could be justly urged. It was, moreover, a fundamental principle with Him, that the worst of men, if they sincerely repented, and turned to God, should be gladly received, as prodigal sons who sought to regain the favour of their Father in heaven. He had come to seek and to save that which was lost, and He sought to proclaim to mankind that He despaired of none, by recognizing, in the most hopeless, the possibility of good. Looking abroad on the world with a divine love and compassion that knew no distinction of race or calling, He designed to show, at its very birth, that the kingdom He came to establish was open to all humanity, and that the only condition of citizenship was spiritual fitness.

Among the publicans, at one of the posts for collecting duties, at Capernaum, was one whom his name, Levi, marked as belonging to the old priestly tribe, though, perhaps, born in Galilee, and now sunk to so questionable a position. He had another name, Matthew, however, by which he is better known as one of the Apostles, and the author of the first Gospel. His business was to examine the goods passing either way on the great high road between the territories of the two neighbouring tetrarchs, to enter them on the official record, to take the duties and credit them in his books, in order, finally, to pay over the gross proceeds, at given times, to the local tax-farmer. He seems to have been in comfortable circumstances, and it is, perhaps, due to his clerkly habits as a publican, that we

owe to him the earliest of the Gospels. He was the son of one Alphēus, the name of the father of James the Less. They may, however, have been different persons, as the name was a very common one; and we know that there were two Judes, two Simons, and two called James, in the narrow circle of Jesus.

Doubtless Levi, or Matthew, had shown an interest in the new Teacher, and had been among the crowds that thronged Him. The quick eye of Jesus had read his heart, and seen his sincerity. Though a publican, he was a Jew, and showed repentance and hopeful trust, which made him a true son of Abraham. The booth in which, in Oriental fashion, he sat at his duties, was at the harbour of the town, on the way to the shore where Jesus was in the habit of addressing the throngs who now always followed Him, and it needed only a look and a word of the Master, to make him throw up his office, and cast in his lot with Him. At the command of Jesus he "left all, rose up, and followed Him;" not, of course, on the moment, for he would have to take formal steps to release himself, and would require to settle his accounts with his superior, before he was free. Henceforth, however, he attended Him who soon had not where to lay His head. It was a critical time for Jesus, and His admission of a publican as a disciple could not fail to irritate His enemies still more. But He had no hesitation in His course. Sent to the lost, He gladly welcomed, to His inmost circle, one of their number in whom He saw the germs of true spiritual life, in calm disregard of all the prejudices of the time, and all the false religious narrowness of His fellow countrymen, and their ecclesiastical leaders. He desired, in the choice of a publican as apostle, to embody visibly His love for sinners, and show the quickening virtue of the kingdom of God, even in the most unlikely.

An act so entirely new and revolutionary, in the best sense, was too momentous in the eyes of Matthew to pass unnoticed. It was the opening of a new day for the multitudes whom the narrow self-righteousness of the Rabbis had branded as under the curse of God, and had condemned as hopeless before Him. The new "call" of Jesus was in vivid contrast to that of Abraham and Moses, for Abraham had been separated even from his tribe, and Moses summoned only the Jews to found the theocracy he proposed to establish. The "call" which Matthew had obeyed was as infinitely comprehensive as the earlier ones had been rigidly exclusive. It showed that all would be admitted to the society Jesus was setting up, whatever their social position, if they had spiritual fitness for membership. Caste was utterly disallowed: before the great Teacher, all men, as such, were recognized as equally sons of the Heavenly Father. Accustomed from infancy to take this for granted, we cannot realize the magnitude of the gift this new principle inaugurated, or its astounding novelty. A Brahmin, who should proclaim it in India, and illustrate the social enfranchisement he taught, by raising a

despised Pariah to his intimate intercourse and friendship, would be the only counterpart we can imagine at this day.

It was natural, therefore, that Matthew should celebrate an event so unique as his call, by a "great feast in his house," in honour of Jesus; and no less so that he should invite a large number of his class, to rejoice with him at the new era opened to them, or that he should extend the invitation to his friends of the proscribed classes generally. A number of persons in bad odour with their more correct fellow-citizens were, hence, brought together by him, along with the publicans of the locality, to do Jesus honour: persons branded by public opinion as "sinners," a name given indiscriminately to usurers, gamblers, thieves, publicans, shepherds, and sellers of fruit grown in the sabbath years. It might have seemed doubtful whether Jesus would sit down with such a company, for, even with us, it would be a bold step for any public teacher to join a gathering of persons in bad repute. The admission of Matthew to the discipleship must have seemed to many a great mistake. Nothing could more certainly damage the prospects of Jesus with the influential classes, or create a wider or deeper prejudice and distrust. But nothing weighed for a moment with Him against truth and right. His soul was filled with a grand enthusiasm for humanity, and no false or narrow exclusiveness of the day could be allowed to stand in its way. He accepted the invitation with the readiest cheerfulness, and spent the evening in the pleasures of friendly social intercourse with the strange assembly.

The Rabbis had hardly as yet made up their minds how to act respecting Him. They had attended John's preaching, though they did not submit to his baptism, which would have been to own his sweeping charges against their order, as a brood of serpents. But Jesus had not as yet attacked them. He would fain have won them, as well as the people, to the kingdom of God. He had preached this kingdom, and the need of righteousness: had honoured Moses and the prophets: had pressed, as His great precepts, the love of God and our neighbour; and in all these matters the Pharisees could support Him. He had enforced moderation on His disciples, and had sought intercourse with the Rabbis, rather than shunned it. His reply to their earlier opposition was gentle, though unanswerable. No doubt He knew from the first that they would reject His overtures, but it was none the less right to seek to woo them to friendship, that they might enter His kingdom if they would. Had they joined Him, their influence would have aided His work: if they refused, He had done His part. He did, indeed, win some. Here and there a Rabbi humbled himself to follow Him though He did not belong to the schools, and was the deadly opponent of their cherished traditions. Others hesitated, but some even of the leading Pharisees, as at Capernaum, invited Him to their houses and tables, listened to His teaching, reasoned modestly with Him, and treated Him, every way, with respect. He was looked upon by them as a

friend of the nation, and the title of Rabbi was willingly given Him.

But it became clearer, each day, that there could be no alliance between views so opposed as His and theirs. Where action was needed He would not for a moment conceal His difference from them, and Matthew's feast was an occasion on which a great principle demanded decisive expression.

To the Rabbis, and the Pharisees at large, nothing could be more unbecoming and irregular than the presence of Jesus at Matthew's feast. To be Levitically "clean," was the supreme necessity of their religious lives. They regarded themselves as true friends of their race, and they were, in fact, the leaders of the nation. But they looked at men not simply as such, but through the cold superficial medium of an artificial theology, which dried up their sympathy. Their philanthropy was narrowed to the limits of Levitical purity. Publicans and sinners, and the mass of the lower classes, were, to a Pharisee, hopelessly lost, because of their "uncleanness," and he shrank from all contact with them. He might wish to save, but he dared not touch, or come near them, and so left them to their misery and sin. No Pharisee would receive a person as a guest if he suspected that he was a "sinner." He would not let one of the "Amhaaretz"—the common people—touch him. It was unlawful to come into their company, even with the holy design of inducing them to read the Law, and it was defilement to take food from them, or, indeed, from any stranger, or even to touch a knife belonging to them. The thousands "unclean" from mere ignorance, or from their callings, or from carelessness, were an "abomination," "vermin," "unclean beasts," and "twice accursed." And as to touch the clothes of one of the "common people," defiled every Pharisee alike, the touch of those of a Pharisee of a lower grade of Levitical purity defiled one of a higher. Like the Essenes, one Pharisee avoided the contact of another less strict, and, therefore, of a lower rank of holiness.

It must, therefore, have been as if a Brahmin had outraged every idea of Hindoo religion and morals, by sitting down at a meal with Sudras, when the Rabbis at Capernaum saw and heard of Jesus reclining at table among a promiscuous gathering of publicans and sinners.

They had not yet, however, come to open controversy with Him, and contented themselves with contemptuous taunts about Him to the disciples, who, as Jews, must have at least formerly shared the sovereign contempt felt for such hated social outcasts. Even to hold a religious service with them would have been a breach of the Law, but to join them on a footing of friendly intercourse! "Founder of a new *holy* kingdom of God, and recline at table with publicans and sinners!" How keenly such words must have wounded men like Peter, and the small knot of disciples as yet round Jesus, may be imagined. They had been taught in the school of the Baptist, an

earnest Jew, who had enforced ultra-Pharisaic Judaism. The early scruples of Peter survived even to apostolic times. James was a Nazarite, if we can trust tradition, till his death, and even Matthew, the priestly publican, for his name Levi shows him to have been of priestly race, is said to have eaten, through life, only fruit, vegetables, and bread, but no flesh. In their perplexity and distress they appealed to Jesus.

It was well they did so, for their distress procured for all ages an answer of divine sweetness and grandeur. "To whom *should* I go but to such as these? The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick. Turn to the prophets whom you revere, and think what the words of Hosea mean, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'—acts rather than offerings—practical godliness, not legal forms—divine sympathy with the lost, rather than only the empty show of outward worship—for I have not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners to repentance. I expect nothing from men who think they are righteous and despise others. They feel no need of me. My help is needed for just such 'sinners' as they would have me leave to perish."

Jesus had not, of course, the bodily sick in His thoughts. He spoke of the mass of the people of the middle and lower ranks, too sadly marked by religious shortcomings and unworthiness. The guests at Matthew's table were, doubtless, more or less open to accusations of covetousness, impurity, indifference to morality and religion, and troublesomeness as citizens. John would have kept himself aloof from them, unless they came as penitents, for baptism. He had lived in wildernesses, apart from men, shrinking from the turmoil of the great world. He had even forbidden lawful enjoyments and pleasures. He had sought to build up the Kingdom of Heaven on the lonely banks of the Jordan, far from men, by sternly commanding the broken hearts that sought peace and consolation from him, to live lives of Jewish austerity and repentance. Jesus required a change of heart no less than he, but He did not lead men out of the world to secure it, or burden life with the anxiety and disquiet of an outward purity.

He came trustfully to them into their little world, bringing with Him a heart full of divine benevolence and tender gentleness. In His eyes they were "sick," and He treated them like a true physician, entering into all their interests, sympathizing with their cares and sorows, realizing their special wants, and bearing Himself as a friend among friends. They were men, and, as such, capable of sorrow for sin, and efforts towards a nobler life. They had hearts to recognize goodness, and might thus be won to faith in Himself, as the ideal of the highest spiritual life. Nothing can mark the grandeur of His enthusiasm for humanity, more than that He thus proposed to lay the foundation of His kingdom in a class on which the priests and theologians, and the higher ranks of the day, looked down with haughty contempt and moral aversion. It shows how deeply He looked into things, that He

recognized the greater openness for the Truth, of castes thus discredited; their franker and more decisive bearing towards the startling innovations of His teaching; their deeper longing for peace of conscience and reconciliation to God It was the sense of this that had led to the choice of His first disciples from the ranks of the people; and it was this, in part, that led to that of Matthew. In his case, however, there was, also, the proclamation of His indifference to outward distinctions, or rules, afterwards formulated by Peter, who had never forgotten the lesson, into the memorable words—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but, in every nation, he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him." A truth evident enough to-day, but carrying with ft, when inaugurated by Jesus, an entire revolution in the religious history of mankind.

The divine charity that ran so counter to the narrow pride of the Rabbis was no less startling to the disciples of John, but there were other difficulties to both. No open breach had yet taken place, and a friendly conference might explain much. Jesus had silently left the harsh discipline of fasting behind, and had prescribed no formal rules for prayer, such as were common to the Rabbis and their disciples, and to those of the Baptist; and now a deputation came to ask Him for an explanation. The law of Moses had appointed only one fast in the year, on the Day of Atonement, but the Rabbis had added many, both public and private. They enjoined one for the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and others for various incidents connected with the siege, or the troubles of the first period after the Captivity. There was another to lament the day on which the translation of the Scriptures into Greek had been finished, and every public calamity or emergency was signalized by a fast specially enjoined by the authorities. It was rather to private fasts, however, that allusion was made. Strict Pharisees, aiming at the highest degree of merit, fasted voluntarily every Monday and Thursday, to commemorate, respectively, the going up of Moses to the Mount on the fifth day, to receive the renewed tables of the Commandments, and his descent on the second. They often added other fasts, to have lucky dreams, and to obtain their interpretation, for, like the Essenes, the Pharisees looked on fasts as a preparation for receiving revelations. They fasted also to avert evil, or to procure some good. Mortification and self-infliction had become a formal religious merit, in the mercenary theology of the day, and was paraded before the world by some, to heighten their reputation for holiness. The idea had, at first, risen from a fancied opposition between the body and the soul; as if the latter could only be duly raised by depressing the former. But asceticism was contrary to the genius of the new kingdom of God, which laid no stress on meat, or drink, or abstinence from them, but on "righteousness, peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost."

Even prayer had been reduced to a mechanical system, as part of

"the hedge of the Law," invented by the Rabbis. No one could lay greater stress on it than Jesus, when offered as the utterance of contrite humility; but, as a part of a system of merit like the Rabbinical theology of the day, He held it lightly. No precepts could be more worthy than many found, even yet, in the Rabbis, respecting the true worth of prayer; but, in practice, these higher teachings had fallen into wide disuse. It had come to be tedious for length, and abounded in repetitions. Fixed rules for correct prayer were taught, with fixed hours, and prescribed forms, and superstitious power was assigned to the mere words. The householder was to repeat the Sch'ma in his house each evening, to drive away evil spirits. To say it when in bed was like grasping a two-edged sword, to slay the assaulting demons. The mere form of prayer, if repeated rightly and often, was counted as merit laid up in heaven. To repeat the Sch'ma was, in fact, in the phrase of the Rabbis, "to make the kingdom of Heaven one's own."

It could not be doubtful how Jesus would bear Himself to views so opposed to inner and spiritual religion. Silently omitting any reference to the objection respecting prayer, He addressed Himself to the question of fasting. "His presence with His disciples was like that of a bridegroom with His companions, during the marriage rejoicings. Could He ask them to fast while He was with them? It would be time for them to do so when He was taken away from them. They would fast then!" Seizing the opportunity, and addressing the disciples of John especially, He went even further. "John had sought to do what was worse than hopeless—to renew the old theocracy, by merely external reform; to patch up the old and torn robe of Judaism, and make it serve a new age. It was as vain as a man's sewing a piece of raw unteazled cloth on the rent of an old garment; the patch could only tear off so much more, and make the rent worse, while the patch would itself be a mere shred. Or, it was like putting new wine into old skins, which must burst when the wine fermented. New teaching, like His, must be put into new bottles; the forms and rites that had served till now were of no more use: a new dispensation had come, which these forms would only cumber. New forms were needed for the new religious life He came to introduce."

Words so fatal to cherished prejudices must have struck deep, but the hearts He had unavoidably wounded were not left without tender soothing. "It was no wonder that John had clung to the faith of his fathers, even in its outward accidents. He had drunk of the old wine, and would not change it for new, contented to know that 'the old was good.'" Henceforth, however, the position of Jesus to the worn-out forms of the past was unmistakable. He had chosen His path, and would lead mankind from the bondage of the letter to the freedom of the spirit, and the worshippers of the letter arrayed themselves against Him. As became the founder of the first religion of

the spirit alone, the world had seen, He henceforth silently ignored the ceremonial law, avoiding open condemnation, but bearing Himself towards it throughout, as He did in the matter of circumcison, which He never enforced on His disciples, or demanded from believing heathen, and never commended, though He never, in words, condemned it. The whole ritual system, of which it was the most prominent feature, was treated as merely indifferent.

It was indescribably touching to see, at the very threshold of our Lord's public life, that even when He uses so joyous an image of Himself as that of a bridegroom, He dashes-in the picture with shadow. He had begun His course by the Temptation, but from it till the close, His path lay through struggle, suffering, and self-sacrifice, to a far other glory than that which the world expected in the Messiah. He would, indeed, have known His nation, and their Roman masters; the dominant Pharisees, and the priesthood, badly, not to have foreseen, from the first, that He would have to pass through the fiercest conflict, only to reach a tragic end. Thoughts of self-denial, self-sacrifice, even to the surrender of life; of losing life that He might gain it; of the corn dying that it might bring forth fruit, run like a dark thread through all His discourses, to the very end. He sends His apostles forth like sheep amongst wolves; foretells their suffering, the bitterest persecution; and consoles them only with the one thought that it should content the disciple to be on the same footing with Himself. In the sermon on the Mount, He predicts that all who believe on Him will suffer hatred and evil treatment. He recognizes those only as His true followers who, denying themselves, take up His cross and bear it. He has nothing to promise His disciples but that they should be servants, submitting patiently to the extremest wrong, and has no higher vision even for Himself. He may rejoice as the bridegroom with His friends, for a time, but will soon be taken away from them. A kingdom founded on such a basis of deliberate self-denial and self-sacrifice, is unique in the history of the world.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE CHOICE OF THE TWELVE, AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

How long Jesus remained at Capernaum is not told us, but we may readily believe that He was glad to leave it, with its gathering opposition, as soon as possible. It was His centre of action, but the kingdom needed to be proclaimed over the whole land. Preaching was the special agency on which He relied, far more than on any displays of supernatural power. It was by it He designed to work the stupendous spiritual miracle of the new birth of Israel and of Humanity. As the first founder of a religion which had no code of laws, and repudiated force, addressing itself solely to the free convictions of men, the living word and its illustration in His own life, were alone open to Him as means for its diffusion. The hearts and souls must be won over to the highest truth, by persuading the conscience, and thus influencing the will. In these earlier months He took advantage of the facilities of the Synagogue service, to gain the ear of the people, but His preaching was very different from the stereotyped lifelessness of the Rabbis, and excited universal astonishment by its originality, power, and resistless enthusiasm. At a later time, when His "new doctrine" had roused the opposition of the authorities, the use of the synagogues was no longer permitted Him. But, even from the first, He did not confine Himself to fixed times or places. He addressed the people on the shores of the lake, on the lonely slopes and valleys of the hills, in the streets and market-places of towns and villages, at the crossing points of the public roads, and even in houses; any place, indeed, that offered an audience, was alike to Him. The burden and spirit of His preaching may be gathered from the Gospels throughout. He proclaimed Himself the Good Shepherd seeking to bring back the lost sheep to the heavenly fold; to quicken and turn towards God the weak, sinful human will, and to breathe into the soul aspirations after a higher spiritual life, from the fullness of His own perfect example.

To win all, He moved as a man among men, a friend among friends; a helper amongst all who needed help, declining every outward honour or flattery, or even the appearance of either. While advancing the most amazing pretensions as His kingly prerogative, He was, personally, so meek and lowly that He could make this gentle humility a ground for the trust and unembarrassed approach of all who were troubled. Content with obscurity, and leaving to others the struggle for distinction or place, He chose a life so humble that the poorest had no awe of His dignity, but gathered round Him as their special friend. His tastes were in keeping with this simplicity, for He delighted in the society of the lowly, and children clustered in His steps

with the natural instinct that detects one who loves them. He was never engrossed by His own affairs, but ever ready to give Himself up to those of others—to counsel them in difficulties, to sympathize with them in their sorrows or joys, and to relieve their sickness or wants. It is His grand peculiarity, that there is a total oblivion of self in His whole life. The enthusiasm of a divine love, in the pure light of which no selfish thought could live, filled His whole soul. He showed abiding sympathy for human weakness, and to cheer the outcast and hopeless, He announced that He came to seek such as to others seemed lost. In His joy over a sinner won back to righteousness He hears even the angels of God rejoicing.

There had never appeared in any age such a man, such a friend, or such a helper. He seemed the contrast of a king or prince, and yet all His words were kingly; all His acts a succession of the kingliest deeds, decisions, and commands, and His whole public life, the silent and yet truest foundation of an everlasting kingdom. He must, indeed, have seemed anything rather than the founder of a new society, or of a new empire, and it must have startled men when they found that He had, by His works and life, established in the midst of the old theocracy the framework of the most imperishable and the widest-reaching empire this earth has ever seen; an empire before which all former religious systems were to fade away. But though His absolute self-control was never intermitted, there were times when the claims of the truth, or the service of His kingdom, brought out the full grandeur of His power and kingly greatness. It was thus when He had to meet and confute prejudice and error, or to heal the sick and diseased. At times we shall see Him forced to blame and condemn, but this was only a passing shadow on the clear heaven of His unvarying grace and love. It is impossible to realize such an appearance, but we can imagine it in some measure. The stainless truth and uprightness which filled His whole nature, the exhaustless love and pity, which were the very breath of His spirit; the radiant joy of the bridegroom wedding redeemed humanity; the calm light as of other worlds in His every look, may well account for the deathless love and devotion He inspired in those whom He suffered to follow Him.

The widening success of His work had already required an addition to the small circle of His immediate attendants. But a single accession, like that of Matthew, was, erelong, not enough. It soon became necessary to select a larger number who might be constantly in His company, and receive His instructions, that they might, in due time, go forth to proclaim the kingdom over a wider area than He could Himself reach. Its laws, its morality, its relations to the Old Dispensation, must be taught them, and they must catch His enthusiasm by such a lengthened intercourse in the familiarity of private life, as would kindle in their souls the ideal He presented. That they should follow Him at all would be left to themselves, but the choice would

be made by Himself, of such as, on various grounds, He saw fittest. They were to be Apostles, or missionaries, and would have, for their high commission, the organization of the new kingdom of God, first in Israel, and then through the world.

To accept such an invitation implied no little enthusiasm. No earthly reward was held out, but, on the contrary, the sacrifice of all personal claims was demanded. They were to abandon their former calling, whatever it might be, with all its present or prospective advantages, to give up all family ties, to bear the worst indignities and ill-treatment, and yet repress even just resentment. They were to hold their lives at His service, and willingly yield them, if it required the sacrifice. A measure of self-restriction is implied as the basis of any state, for no society could flourish where its interests, as a whole, are not spontaneously considered before those of the individual citizen. But the self-abnegation required by Jesus in those admitted to that which He was now founding, was without a parallel, for while earthly states return an equivalent, in many ways, for the self-surrender they impose, He proclaimed from the first that those who joined His kingdom must do so "hoping for nothing again" to compensate for any self-sacrifice, even the greatest. In the case of the "Apostles," the self-surrender was not merely contingent, but present and final, for He held before them no prospect through life but privation and persecution, and even possible martyrdom. In the next world, indeed, He promised rewards, but He precluded mere mercenary hopes even of these, by making them conditional on unfeigned sincerity in the obedience to His laws and love of His person. The mere hypocrite—or actor—could have no object in joining Him, and was indignantly denounced. The truest honesty in word and deed were alone accepted, and the want of it, in any degree, was the one fatal moral defect.

It is not surprising, therefore, that all who offered themselves as His followers were not accepted. Where He saw unfitness, He repelled advances. To a Rabbi who came saluting Him as "Teacher," and professing his willingness to follow Him as His disciple, He returned the discouraging answer, that the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man—the Messiah—had not where to lay His head. It might have seemed of moment to secure the support of a Rabbi, but Jesus had seen the worldly bent of his thoughts, and thus turned him aside, by blasting any hopes of advantage or honour in joining Him. Even indecision or hesitation, whatever the ground, was fatal to admittance to His favour. The request of a disciple to go first and bury his father, before finally following Him, was only met by the command to follow Him at once, and leave the spiritually dead to bury the corporeally dead: to put off decision, even for so worthy a cause as desire to perform the last offices to a father, was dangerous! "Go, thou, and preach the kingdom of God." The devotion due to it, unreservedly, could not be shared, even by the claims of affection and earthly duties. A request to be allowed

to bid his household farewell, before finally leaving them, was met by a similar answer—"No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." The indispensable condition of admittance into the inner circle who followed and lived with Him, was an engrossing enthusiasm for Himself and His work, which permitted concern for no second interest whatever.

He had determined to surround Himself with a small body of such trustworthy followers, limiting the number, by an association natural to His race, to twelve. They were to form the closest, inmost circle of His disciples, and to be, in fact, His friends and companions. He would give them His fullest confidence: open His mind to them more fully than to others: and, by living among them, inspire them with His own fervour, and mould them to His own likeness. They would see how His soul never unbent from its grand enthusiasm: how He never wearied in His transcendent devotion of body and spirit to His work. In seeing and hearing Him, they would gain experience: in the opposition and trials they met in His company, their fidelity would be put to the test, and, in the end, they would be qualified for the special work for which they had been chosen—to be sent forth to preach, and to repeat the miraculous works of their Master, as evidence of His divine authority.

It is not stated definitely where the selection of the Apostle was made. His preaching had already gained a "great multitude" of disciples who followed Him in His journey from town to town, along with a vast crowd drawn after Him by various motives. The movement was rapidly assuming an importance like that of John's; it was extending over the nation. Withdrawing Himself, as was His frequent custom, from the throng, by night, He retired once more into the hills to pray, and continued in devotion till morning. Brought up among hills, He was ever fond of their solitude, their pure air and open sky, which seemed to bring Him nearer His Father. It was somewhere apparently, in the hilly background of the Sea of Galilee, for though spoken of as "the mountain," there are no means of deciding the precise locality. When the day broke, instead of seeking rest, He showed the subject of His night-long communion with His Heavenly Father, by proceeding to select His future Apostles. The crowd of His disciples had returned with the new day, from the neighbouring towns and villages where they had spent the night, when Jesus, coming down from His solitary devotions, gathered them once more round Him, and "calling to Him whom He Himself would," "appointed twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He should send them forth to preach—to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."

His choice was necessarily made from a comparatively small number, for the majority must have lately joined Him, and must thus have been, as yet, little known. So far as possible He made His selection from those who had been longest with Him, and whom He had, in some measure, proved; but they were as a whole, simple, un

learned, plastic men of the people, for Jesus had already seen that the spiritual regeneration of Israel must rise from the humbler classes. He knew that the educated men of the nation, the Rabbis and priests, were perverted and prejudiced, and He could not look to the officials or authorities of any grade, or to the prevailing religious schools. The commonalty were sounder, freer from the errors of the age,—more open to the eternal truths He came to announce, and more ready to accept the spiritual kingdom He came to found. Yet, it may be, that had the choice been wider, some one might have been available from the trained intellects of the nation, with results it would be vain to conjecture. Had Paul been one of the twelve, now chosen by Christ, how much might the genius, the Rabbinical training, the breadth of mind, and the grand loving enthusiasm which almost founded Western Christianity, have changed, in the history told by the Gospels? He laid no stress on their former social position, or religious party, for they included, on the one side, a publican, who was also a Levite, and on the other, one who had belonged to the ultra-puritan Zealots, the fanatical party of Judas the Galilæan. Nor did He require them to be unmarried, for Peter, we know, had a wife, and if we may trust the tradition of the Armenian Church, the only Apostles who were single were the sons of Zebedee, and Thomas. The Capernaum circle yielded Him no fewer than seven of the twelve,—Peter, and his brother Andrew, who lived with him; two sons from the house of Zabdai,—James and John; two sons of Alphæus,—James the Little, and Jude, who is commonly distinguished as Lebbæus, the stout-hearted,—or Thaddæus, the brave. The publican Matthew was also from Capernaum, and was the third from the household of Alphæus, if the name refer to the father of James the Little and Jude; and Philip belonged to the village of Bethsaida in its immediate neighbourhood, making in all, eight of the twelve, virtually from the same favoured place. Of the remaining four, Nathanael, the son of Talmai, the Bartholomew of our version, was from Cana, on the north side of the plain of El Battauf, on which Jesus had so often looked down from the Nazareth hill-top. Thomas—ready to die, but slow to believe: manly and full of grave tenderness,—whose Hebrew name was sometimes turned into the Greek equivalent Didymus, the twin,—was the same person,—one tradition says,—as Judas, the brother of Jesus, as if Mary had had a double birth, after bearing her eldest son. If so, one of the household amongst whom our Saviour had grown up, one son of His mother, redeemed the general coldness of the rest. The name of Simon the Zealot, another Galilæan, and that of the only Apostle from Judea,—Judas, the traitor, of the village of Kerioth, in the south of Juda—close the list.

Such was the band which Jesus now gathered round Him. At least four,—James and John, and James the Little and Jude,—seem to have been His relations, or connections, to whom, if we accept the tradition I have quoted, we must add Thomas. One, at least, was of

priestly race,—the degenerate Levite, Matthew, who had sunk to an office held so utterly infamous as a publican's. He and the sons of Zebedee seem to have been in a fair position, but Peter, whom we see in the forty days after the Resurrection, once more busy as a fisherman, in his boat on the Lake of Galilee; naked, perhaps literally, as the fishermen there still often are, that he might the better, like them, drag the net after him through the water, as he swam with it; or casting his fisher's coat round him, and leaping into the Lake to swim ashore to Jesus, is, it may be, a fair illustration of the social position of most of His brethren in the Apostolate.

In the lists given in the Gospels, Peter, the host of His Lord, at Capernaum, always holds the first place, but there are variations in the order assigned to others. A true Galilæan—Peter was energetic and fiery, rather than self-contained and reflective. Warm-hearted and impulsive, he had at once the strength and weakness of such a temperament. He is always the first to speak for his brethren; he craves earnestly one moment what he as earnestly refused the moment before; he is the first to draw the sword for Jesus, but also the first to deny Him. John recognizes his risen Master first at the Lake of Galilee, but Peter throws himself forthwith into the Lake, and is the first to reach Jesus' feet; he acts on the moment, and has even to be rebuked for being too ready with his counsel. Though for a moment he denies Christ, a look melts him, and tradition only fills up what we feel a true picture, when it tells us that he rose each night, through life, at the hour at which he had sinned so weakly, to pray for forgiveness; or when it speaks of him, at last, as crucified with his head downwards, thinking himself unworthy of a nearer approach to the death of his Lord.

In Peter, Jesus had an apostle who gave up his whole being to his Master. No one was more receptive of lofty impressions, and with this moral sensibility, there was a ready, quick, happy insight, which divined the significance of his Master's words with swift intelligence. Yet, with this delicacy of forecast, and true conception of the inner and the expressed thoughts of Jesus; with his quick eye for the signs of the times, and his zeal to act on their indications, he was deficient in sharp logical power of thought, and in tenacious strength of will. In this combination of strength and weakness, he was the most perfect type of the Galilæan in the Apostolate, and became a special friend of Jesus, who found in him the most enthusiastic of His followers; the reflection, in some respects, of His own nature, and a heart than which none beat truer, though in the most decisive moments he proved no firm support, but a bending reed, weak from momentary trust in himself rather than on his Lord.

James and John, the sons of Zabdai, were men of a different mould. They supplied what was wanting in Peter. Ready to accept the new ideas, and reproducing them for themselves, with mingled enthusiasm and freshness of conception, they had the same intense devo-

tion to their Master as Peter, with something, at times, of the same artless and unconscious self-prominence. Their energy of will, and quick flaming up at any opposition, were marked features of both, and obtained for them, from Jesus, the name of "the Sons of Thunder." In their zeal for their Master they would have called down judgment from heaven against an inhospitable village, and wished to silence an unknown worker who spoke in the name of Christ, without belonging to the twelve. In James, the Apostles had their first martyr, but John lived to be the last survivor of them all. Hot zeal, based on intense devotion, was, however, only a passing characteristic, at least of John. He, of all the twelve, drank deepest into his Master's Spirit, and realized it most. Self-contained, meditative, tender, he thought less of Christ's acts, than of the words which were the revelations of His inner Being. His whole spiritual nature gave itself up to loving contemplation of the wondrous life passing before him. We owe to him, in his Gospel, an image of the higher nature of our Lord, such as only one to whom He was all in all could have painted. If perfect love beget love in return, it was inevitable that John should win the supreme place in Christ's affection. If the disciple leaned on the Master's bosom, it was because he had shown the love that at the last brought him, alone, of the twelve, to the foot of the Cross.

Of Andrew, the brother of Peter, we know very little. We have to trust to tradition, alone, for his history, after Christ's death. He is said, by one legend, to have gone among the Scythians, and, on this ground, the Russians have made him their national Saint. Another assigns Greece, and afterwards Asia Minor and Thrace, as the scene of his work, and speaks of him as put to death in Achaia, on a cross of the form since known by his name. The incidental notices of the others, in the Gospels, are very slight, and need not be anticipated. Philip is said, in the ecclesiastical legends, to have been a chariot driver; Bartholomew, a shepherd, or gardener. But no name is more striking in the list than that of Simon the Zealot, for to none of the twelve could the contrast be so vivid between their former and their new position. What revolution of thought and heart could be greater than that which had thus changed into a follower of Jesus one of the fierce war party of the day, which looked on the presence of Rome in the Holy Land as treason against the Majesty of Jehovah —a party who were fanatical in their Jewish strictness and exclusiveness? Like many others of the twelve, he is little more than a name. Indeed, even in the second century, the vaguest traditions were all that survived of any but two or three of them. They were men of no high commanding powers, to make their names rise on all men's tongues, but they, doubtless, in every case but that of the betrayer, did their work faithfully, and effected results of permanent value in the spread of the Kingdom. Still more, they displayed before the world, for the first time, the then amazing spectacle and teaching of a Christian life. That we know so little of men who were such signal

benefactors of the race, is only what we have to ponder in the cases of those to whom the world has owed most. It is the law, in the moral as in the physical world, that one sows and another reaps, and the seed which bears the golden ears has long died away unremembered, before the gathering of the autumn sheaves.

It is touching to think of Jesus surrounded by the little band He had thus chosen—simple, true-hearted men, indeed, but needing so much to fit them for their amazing honour, and momentous duties. No wonder they were timid and reverent before Him; no wonder that He was so sorely tried with their dull apprehension and weak human shortcomings, as to speak sternly or sadly to them at times; once indeed, with the words, "O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you?" He calls them "of little understanding," "hardened," "fearful," "worldly," and "of little faith." But amidst all, they "continued with Him in His trials" till the end, and He forgot their failings in the tender thought, that if their flesh was weak, their spirit was willing. They were His "brethren," His "servants," His "fellow-workers," His "little children," His "little ones," and, even, as the end approached, "His friends." He might, at times, have to reprove them, but His bearing towards them, day by day, was a loving condescension to their weakness, and a patient effort to draw them to Himself, as far as possible. There is no trace of such formal instruction as the Rabbis gave their followers; they had rather to listen to His words to the people, and ask Him in private for explanation where needed. He rather trained and developed their spiritual character, than indoctrinated them in systematic theology. Above all, He lived before them, and was Himself their great lesson. Nor can there be a more striking illustration of the completeness with which they forgot their own being in the presence of their Master, than the silence of the writers of the Gospels respecting themselves in their records of Jesus. He, alone, filled their eye, their thoughts, their hearts. They had been like children before Him, while He was with them, and in the hallowed reverence of their remembered intercourse, His image filled the whole retrospect, to the utter subordination of all things else. The months they had spent in His company under the palm-trees, or on the hills, or by the sea; when they breathed the same air with Him; heard His voice; saw His life; and wondered at His mighty acts,—raised them, in their own belief, above the prophets and the kings, who had longed for such a vision of the Messiah, but had not had it vouchsafed them.

Of the preaching of Jesus, the Gospel preserves numerous fragments, but no lengthened abstract of any single discourse, except that of the "Sermon on the Mount." It seems to have been delivered immediately after the choice of the twelve, to the disciples at large and the multitude who thronged to hear the new Rabbi. Descending from the higher point to which He had called up His Apostles, He

came towards the crowd, which waited for Him at a level place below. There were numbers from every part—from Judea and Jerusalem in the south, and even from the sea-coast of Tyre and Sidon; some to hear Him, others to be cured of their diseases, and many to be delivered from unclean spirits. The commotion and excitement were great at His appearance, for it had been found that to touch Him was to be cured, and, hence, all sought, either by their own efforts, or with the help of friends, to get near enough to Him to do so. After a time, however, the tumult was stayed, all having been healed, and He proceeded, before they broke up, to care for their spiritual, as He had already for their physical wants.

Tradition has chosen the hill known as the "Horns of Hattin," two horn-like heights, rising sixty feet above the plain between them—two hours west of Tiberias, at the mouth of the gorge which opens, past Magdala, into the wild cliffs of Arbela, famous in the history of the Zealots as their hiding-place, and famous also for Herod's battles in mid-air at the mouths of their caves, by means of great cages filled with soldiers let down the precipices. It is greatly in favour of this site, to find such a writer as Dean Stanley saying, that the situation so strikingly coincides with the intimations of the Gospel narrative, as almost to force the inference, that, in this instance, the eye of those who selected the spot was rightly guided. The plain on which the hill stands is easily accessible from the Lake, and it is only a few minutes' walk from it to the summit, before reaching which, a broad "level place" has to be crossed—exactly suited for the gathering of a multitude together. It was to this, apparently, that Jesus came down, from one of the higher horns, to address the people. Seated on some slightly elevated rock—for the teacher always sat while he taught—the people and the disciples sitting at His feet, on the grass; the cloudless Syrian sky over them; the blue Lake, with its moving life, on the one hand, and, in the far north, the grand form of Hermon, glittering in the upper air; He began what is to us the Magna Charta of our faith, and to the hearers must have been the formal inauguration of the new kingdom of God.

The choice of the twelve Apostles and the Sermon on the Mount mark a turning point in the public life of Jesus. A crisis in the development of His work had arrived. He had, till now, taken no steps towards a formal and open separation from Judaism, but had contented Himself with gathering converts, whom He left to follow the new life He taught, without any organization as a distinct communion. The symptoms of an approaching rupture with the priests and Rabbis had, however, forced on Him more decisive action. He had met the murmurs at the healing of the paralytic, by the triumphant vindication of the language which had given offence. The choice of a publican as a disciple immediately after, had been a further expression of the fundamental opposition between His ideas and those of the schools and the Temple, and His justification of the

disuse by His disciples, of the outward rites and forms which were vital in the eyes of the orthodoxy of the day, had been another step in the same divergent path. He had openly sanctioned the omission of fasts, and of mechanical rules for prayer, which were sacred with the Rabbis. He had even set the old and new order of things in contrast, and had thus assumed independent authority as a religious teacher; the sum of all offence in a rigid theocracy.

The choice of the twelve, and the Sermon on the Mount, were the final and distinct proclamation of His new position. The Apostles must have seemed, to a Jew, the twelve patriarchs of a new spiritual Israel, to be substituted for the old; the heads of new tribes, to be gathered by their teaching, as the future people of God. The old skins had been proved unfit for the new wine; henceforth, new skins must be provided; new forms, for a new faith. The society thus organized needed a promulgation of the laws under which it was to live, and this it received in the Sermon on the Mount.

The audience addressed consisted of the newly chosen twelve; the unknown crowd who heard Him with favour, and were, hence, spoken of as His disciples; and the promiscuous multitude drawn to Him, for the time, by various motives. Jesus had no outer and inner circle, for public and secret doctrines, like the Rabbis, for, though He explained to the twelve, in private, any points in His discourses they had not understood, the discourses themselves were delivered to all who came to hear them. This Sermon, which is the fullest statement we have of the nature of His kingdom, and of the condition and duties of its citizenship, was spoken under the open sky, to all who happened to form His audience.

In this great declaration of the principles and laws of the Christian republic—a republic in the relations of its citizens to each other—a kingdom, in their relations to Jesus, the omissions are no less striking than the demands. There is no reference to the priests or Rabbis—till then the undisputed authorities in religion—nor is the rite of circumcision even mentioned, though it made the Jew a member of the Old Covenant, as a mere theocratic form, apart from moral requirements. It is not condemned, but it is ignored. Till now, a vital condition of entrance into the kingdom of God, it is so no more. Nor are any other outward forms more in favour. The new kingdom is to be founded only on righteousness and love, and contrasts with the old by its spiritual freedom, untrammeled by outward rules. It opposes to the nationality and limitation of the old theocracy a universal invitation, with no restriction except that of character and conduct. Citizenship is offered to all who sincerely believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and honestly repent before God. Even the few opening sentences mark the revolution in religious conceptions which the new faith involves. Temporal evil, which, under the former dispensation had been the mark of divine displeasure, became, in the teaching of Jesus, the mark of fellowship

and pledge of heavenly reward. The opinion of the day regarded poverty, hunger, trouble, and persecution as punishments for sin: He enumerates them as blessings. Throughout the whole Sermon, no political or theocratic ideas find place, but only spiritual. For the first time in the history of religion, a communion is founded without a priesthood, or offerings, or a Temple, or ceremonial services; without symbolical worship, or a visible sanctuary. There is an utter absence of everything external or sensuous: the grand spiritual truths of absolute religious freedom, love, and righteousness, alone are heard. Nor is the kingdom, thus founded, in itself visible, or corporate, in any ordinary sense; it is manifested only by the witness of the Spirit in the heart, and by the power going forth from it in the life. In the fine words of Herder, Christianity was founded in direct opposition to the stupid dependence on customs, formulæ, and empty usages. It humbled the Jewish, and even the Roman national pride: the moribund Levitical worship and idolatry, however fanatically defended, were wounded to death.

Nothing can be more certain than that Jesus had never studied under the Sopherim, or Scribes. His contemporaries, the Rabbis of Jerusalem, leave no doubt of this, for they frankly avowed their wonder at His knowledge of their theology, and power of Scriptural exposition, though He had never learned theological science in their schools. The same minute acquaintance with the opinions and teachings of the day is seen through the whole of the Hill Sermon. Apart from His mysterious divinity, He was a man like ourselves, "growing in wisdom" with His years, and, therefore, indebted in a measure, at least, to the influences and means around Him, for His human knowledge and opinions. It speaks volumes for His early training by His mother and Joseph, that He should have known the Scriptures as He did, for it is in childhood that the memory gets the bent which marks its strength in manhood. The synagogue school, and constantly recurring services, must, however, have been the great seminary of the wondrous Boy. Passages of the Law had been His only schoolbook, and, doubtless, the village teacher, steeped in reflected Rabbinism, had often flattered his harmless vanity by a display before his young charge, of his knowledge of the traditions and glosses, which won so much honour to the Scribes. The Sabbath and week-day homilies of the Synagogue had made Him a constant listener to local or travelling Rabbis, till, in the thirty years of His Nazareth life, His mind and memory had, doubtless, been saturated with their modes of thought, and the opinions of all the different schools. Theology, moreover, was the staple of village conversation in Nazareth, as elsewhere, for his religion was also the politics of the Jew, and the justification of his haughty national pride. Doubtless, also, in Joseph's cottage there was a manuscript of the Law, and a soul filled with devotion to His Heavenly Father, like that of Jesus, would find some of the Prophets, either there or among His family

friends. Rabbis from Jerusalem, or resident in Galilee, must often have come in His way, during the thirty private years, and how much would such a mind and heart learn of their "wisdom," even in such casual intercourse? His clearness of intellect, His transparent innocence of soul, His freedom of spirit, and transcendent loftiness of morals were all His own, but they must have used, for their high ends, the facilities around Him. The very neighbourhood of a heathen population may have had its influence in breaking down the hereditary narrowness of His race, and who can tell what ardours may have been kindled by the wondrous view from the hill-top of Nazareth? Free from all thought of Himself; filled with a divine enthusiasm for His Father above and for humanity, these mountains, that azure sky, the sweeping table-land beyond the Jordan, the wide glory of heaven and earth, veiling, above, the eternal kingdoms, and, at His feet, revealing the enchanting homes of wide populations differing in blood and in faith, but all alike His brethren, may have coloured not a few of the sacred utterances of the Sermon on the Mount.

This unique example of our Saviour's teaching displays in one view nearly all the characteristics presented by the more detached illustrations preserved in the Gospels. Never systematic, the discourses of Jesus were rather pointed utterances of special truths demanded by the occasion. In perfect inner harmony with each other, these sententious teachings at times appear to conflict, for they are often designed to present opposite sides of the same truth, as the distinct point to be met required. The external and sensuous in all His teachings, however, was always made the vehicle of an inner and heavenly lesson. He necessarily followed the mode to which His hearers were used, and taught them as their own Rabbis were wont, that He might engage attention. At times He puts direct questions, at others He is rhetorical or polemic, or speaks in proverbs, or in more lengthened discourse. He often uses parables, and sometimes even symbolical actions; is always spontaneous and ready; and even, at times, points His words by friendly or cutting irony. But while thus in many ways adopting the style of the Rabbis, His teaching was very different even in outward characteristics. They delivered, painfully, what they had learned like children, overlaying every address with citations, in their fear of saying a word of their own; but the teaching of Christ was the free expression of His own thoughts and feelings, and this, with the weight of the teaching itself, gave Him power over the hearts of His audience. With a minute and exact knowledge of the teaching of the schools, He shows, by repeated use of Rabbinical proofs and arguments, that He was familiar, also, with the current modes of controversy. His fervour, His orginality, and the grandeur of the truths He proclaimed, were enough in themselves to commend His words, but He constantly supports them by the supreme authority of the Scriptures, which were familiar to Him as His mother-speech.

Simple, as a rule, in all He says, He yet often opens glimpses into the infinite heights, where no human thought can follow Him. The spirit of His preaching is as transcendent as its matter. Tenderness and yearning love prevail, but there is not wanting, when needed, the sternness of the righteous judge. Throughout the whole of His ministry, and notably, in the Sermon on the Mount, He bears Himself with a kingly grandeur, dispensing the rewards and punishments of the world to come; opening the kingdom of heaven to those only who fulfil His requirements, and resting the future prospects of men on the reception they give His words. Even to read His utterances forces from all the confession of those who heard Him, that "Never man spake like this."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*Continued*).

The opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount mark the contrast between the New Kingdom of God and the Old. There is no mention of forms, for the whole life of Jesus was one unbroken service of God. The Temple Service, and the burdensome laws of sacrifices, are passed over, for the Sermon was delivered in Galilee, far from the splendour of the one, or the vexatious minuteness and materialism of the other. The great question of clean and unclean, which divided the nation within itself; made life a slavery to rules; and isolated the Jew from all brotherhood with humanity at large, is left to sink into indifference before the grand spiritual truths enunciated. The Law came with threats, prohibitions, and commands; the "Sermon" opens with benedictions, and moves in an atmosphere of promises and enticements. Its first sentences are a succession of lofty congratulations of those whose spirit and bearing already proclaim them fit for the new society.

The virtues thus praised are not the active only, but the passive; not those of doing alone, but of bearing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; blessed the meek, for they will inherit the earth; blessed they that mourn, for they will be comforted; blessed they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be satisfied; blessed the merciful, for they will find mercy; blessed the peace-makers, for they will be called sons of God, blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are ye, when they shall reproach and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in Heaven; for so did they persecute the prophets that were before you."

The mission of Christ was said by Himself, in a quotation from Isaiah, to be to preach to the poor, and hence it is with no surprise

that we find St. Luke substitute simply "the poor" for the "poor in spirit," for both are right. The first disciples were won almost exclusively from among the lowly. "The contented poor," Jesus would here say, "who bear their burden meekly, since it comes from God, those—that is, who are 'poor in spirit,'—have, in their very meekness, the sign and proof that, though poor in outward things, they are rich in higher, for they will, so much the more surely, be, hereafter, the opposite of what they are here. They are the poor who have nothing and yet have all. They have nothing of this world's possessions, and have not yet received the blessing in the world to come. But the very longing for the future, and hope of it, are virtually a present possession. Their devout poverty is their wealth, for it secures treasures hereafter. The 'Kingdom of Heaven' *is* theirs already." This principle runs through all the beatitudes. As Christ's disciples, the future will be the contrast to the present; riches for poverty; joy for mourning; plenty for hunger, a heavenly crown for earthly suffering for the Master's sake. The contrast of sin and pardon; the lowly sense of needed salvation, which already has in itself the assurance that salvation is granted, are implied in all the states of heart recounted. Through all, there runs the deepest sense of the sinfulness and troubles of the present, and springing from this, the loftiest religious aspirations, rising far above the earth, to eternal realities. They thus disclose the inmost and central principle of the new Kingdom; the willing and even joyful surrender of the present, in lowly hope of the future—and that from no lower motive than loving obedience and fidelity to Christ. Immediate self-interest is to be disregarded, for the infinitely higher prospects of the future world. The one passion of the heart is to be for greater righteousness,—that is, for an ever more complete self-surrender to the will of God, and active fulfilment of its demands. For Himself Jesus claims the most loyal devotion, even to the endurance of "all manner of evil," for His sake. To seek happiness is to fail to obtain it, but self-surrender to God, and faith in Christ as the Messiah, in themselves bring it, when disinterested and sincere.

It is striking to note the anticipations of suffering associated by Jesus with true discipleship. Suffering is assumed as its inevitable result. He holds out no attractions to insincerity or worldliness, but at the very outset, fans the chaff from the wheat, and repels all but the earnest and devoted.

Four benedictions are bestowed on the passive virtues; four on the active. To bear poverty with lowly resignation to God; to mourn, and yet trust that all is for the best; to reproduce the meekness which Jesus Himself displayed, and to endure trials and persecutions loyally for His sake, are the negative graces demanded as conditions of membership of the New Kingdom. But active virtues are no less required; the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, which finds

its food in fresh, joyful, continuous acts of goodness; the mercy which delights to bless the wretched; the purity of heart, which strives to realize in the soul the image of God, and the gentleness which spreads peace around it.

The key-note of all the utterances of Christ reveals itself in these few sentences. His kingdom is at once present and future: present by the undoubting faith in His assurances that it would hereafter assuredly be attained: future in the fact that the realization of its joys was reserved for the life to come. Unlike John, He proclaims that the time of expectation is over: that the New Kingdom has already come as a living power in the soul, diffusing its blessings, at once within and around its members. It is established in its rights and duties, to develop and advance, henceforth, till its glory cover the earth. In one aspect, it is incomplete till its full realization in the distant future: in another it is already perfect, for it reigns in every single soul which has humbly accepted Jesus as its King.

After this introduction, He proceeds to enforce on His disciples the duties of their new relation to Him, and to cheer them, by recalling the dignity it confers. "You have, indeed, good cause to rejoice," says He, "and to be brave of heart, for you are the salt of the earth; the light of the world; a city set on a hill." Mere ostentation, or insincere parade of virtue, were abhorrent to Him, and formed His great charge against the acted religion of the day. But the enthusiasm of true goodness, He tells them, must of necessity be seen and felt. Life is shown by its energy; where there is no active vital power, there is only death. He prescribes no lengthened code of duties, but trusts to the ardour and devotion of loyalty to Himself, as a perfect equivalent. Drawn to Him by grateful and lowly affection, He leaves it to the love of His followers to exceed all precise directions, and outstrip all formal requirements. His kingdom is as strictly under law as any other, but, for the endless statutes of earthly monarchies, and the equally unnumbered prescriptions of the old theocracy, He substitutes a single all-sufficing law—the law of love, which makes each member of His kingdom a law to himself. All are to give themselves up to Him as unreservedly as He has given Himself up for them.

Intense sincerity is thus made the fundamental demand, and His own personal example their standard and pattern. To be the light of the world, they must needs look to Him, for He had especially applied that name to Himself. They had the immense advantage of example, so much more effective than precept. The New Kingdom was only the reflection of His own character, and, thus, His commands were best carried out by imitating His life; for He, Himself, was the one perfect illustration of complete fulfilment of its laws. No grudging or partial devotion would suffice. They must heartily conform their inmost being to His image, and shed round them, in their respective spheres, the spiritual blessings which beamed

brightest from Himself. Thus calmly, and as His natural right and place, He constitutes Himself the grand ideal of humanity, and men feel that there is no rashness or incongruity in His assumption of the stupendous dignity.

Failure, however, is human, and hence a few solemn words of warning are added. "Salt keeps and makes sound what would else corrupt. But impure salt may lose its saltness, and once lost it cannot be restored. What was before of blessed use, is, henceforth, worthless, and may be cast out upon the road to be trodden under foot. If you, the salt of the earth, lose your spiritual worth, by faint-heartedness, or sloth, or dark unfaithfulness, your needed energy and efficiency are irreparably gone. Who will take your place? You will be no longer fit for the work I have assigned you. If the salt be pure, it will not lose its power; it is the earth and impurities mixed with it, that make it worthless: and so you must put away all that might make you go back, if you would be true disciples. Your lasting worth depends on your devotion to me being unqualified and absolute. You are to enlighten men as the sun enlightens the world. I am the light of the world: you shine by my light: see that, in turn, you illumine the darkness round you. A light is to shine, not to be hidden. Like a lamp on its stand, it is your office to shed light, and drive off darkness. The beams of your good works must shine before men, that they may honour God, your Father, in Heaven. Like a city set on a hill, you are to draw on you all eyes."

Passing from general principles to specific details, Jesus now proceeded to show the relations of His new kingdom to the old theocracy. The charge of hostility to the Law had been brought against Him, and would be urged against His disciples. He would show them that the new rose itself in the old, and is its completion and glory, not its destruction.

"Think not," said He, "that I came to supersede your ancient Scriptures—the Law and the Prophets. I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. Worthless forms, worn out with age, may perish and must, but not the least jot or tittle of the sacred truths they for a time have clothed, shall pass, while Heaven or earth endure. The forms are not the Law. Rites and ceremonies are only helps, for simple ages, which need material symbols. The kingdom of God has now outgrown them. The truth must henceforth stand alone, appealing to the spirit without such outward aids. Local and national, they have served their day, but the new kingdom of God, which is for all times and races, knows only a worship in spirit and in truth. So far am I from slighting or destroying the truth hidden under these outward forms, that he who breaks one of the least spiritual demands of the Law, and teaches men to copy him in doing so, shall be called least in my kingdom: while he who obeys and teaches them as a whole, shall be called great in it. The Law is for ever sacred. I only strip it of its outward accidents, to reveal the better its divine glory.

Spoken by God, it is eternal. I come to do it honour; to confirm, but also to clear it from human additions and corruptions."

Jesus, in thus speaking, had a very different conception of the Law from that of the Rabbis. To Him it meant the sacred moral commands given from Sinai. The whole apparatus of ceremony and rite at first connected with them, were only rude external accommodations to the childhood of religion, to aid the simple and gross ideas of early ages. Looking beneath the symbol to the essential truth, it was a lofty, religious, moral, and social legislation, far deeper, wiser, holier, and more complete than the highest human system. He knew how the prophets had drawn from it the pure and exalted conceptions they had enforced, anticipating in their spirituality His own teaching. But centuries lay between Him and the prophets, and Judaism had sunk to a painful idolatry of the letter and outward form of the Law, to the neglect of its spirit and substance. The Exile had weakened and perverted the national conscience, and a burning zeal for rigid external observance of the letter had followed the just belief that their national troubles had been a punishment for previous shortcomings.

The Pharisees, who gave the tone to the people, filled up their life with a weary round of offerings, ceremonies, and purifications; and, not content with the prescriptions of Moses, had added a tedious system of meritorious works; fasts, washings, alms, and prayers. The Essenes, and still more John, had turned back to the purer air of the prophets, from this barren, mechanical piety, and had taught that righteousness, love, and human sympathy, were the highest requirements of the Law. But the veil was still on their eyes; their reforms were partial. The Essenes had even more washings than the Pharisees; they eschewed marriage, property, and the world, and the Baptist fasted, and required Pharisaic forms. Jesus pierced to the heart of the truth. Stripping off all obsolete wrappings of rite and symbol, and repudiating all human additions, He proclaimed the Law in its divine ideal, as binding for ever, in its least part, on all ages.

His supreme loyalty to the Law could not fail, in a spirit so divinely sincere, to involve a condemnation of its corruption by the religious teachers of the day. It followed presently: "Except your righteousness exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees," He continued, "ye will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He charges them, not only with themselves breaking the commandments, by their casuistry and their immoral additions, but with leading men at large in the same evil path.

The fundamental principle of the Pharisaic conception of righteousness which Jesus thus strenuously opposed, was their idea that strict observance of the traditions and commands of their schools, in itself satisfied the requirements of God. Fulfilment of what was written in the Law and its Rabbinical expositions, was, in their opinion, only a

question of punctilious outward observance. They weakened the conception of moral evil by subtle discriminations of casuistry. In trifles the most exact minuteness was required, but in greater matters the principles of morality were boldly undermined or surrendered. The tithing of mint, dill, and cummin—mere garden herbs—was vital, but grave questions of right and wrong were treated with indifference. This moral prudery and pedantry, which strained the wine before drinking it, lest a fly might have fallen into it and made it unclean, but made no trouble of swallowing a camel, was the hypocritical righteousness against which Jesus directed His bitterest words. With all their lip veneration for it, they set little value on the study of the Law itself, but much on that of the commentaries of the Rabbis, now embodied in the Mischna and Gemara. The Rabbinical tradition so amplified and twisted the words of the Law, as to make it express, in many cases, the opposite of its natural meaning. Religion had become almost wholly a mechanical service, without reference to the heart. As in other theocratic communities, a man might be eminently religious, in the Pharisaic sense, and yet utterly depraved and immoral. The teaching of the prophets, which demanded internal godliness, was slighted, and the study of their writings almost entirely put aside for that of the legal traditions and of the Law. The desire to define, to the smallest detail, what the Law required, had led, in the course of ages, to a mass of conflicting Rabbinical opinions, which darkened rather than explained each command. The "hedge" round the Law had proved a hedge of thorns, for Rabbis and people alike. The question was, not what was right or wrong, but what the Law, as expounded by the Rabbis, demanded, and zeal was stimulated by the mercenary expectation of an equivalent reward, for scrupulous exactness in fulfilment.

A better illustration of the moral worthlessness of the Pharisaic ideas of righteousness could hardly, perhaps, be found, than in the fact that, with all their ostentatious reverence for the Scriptures, he who touched a copy of them was, thereby, made unclean. "According to you," said the Sadducees of their rivals, "the Scriptures defile the hands, while Homer does not." The skins on which the sacred books were written might have been those of an unclean beast, or, at least, they were part of a dead body. But the Pharisees had their retort ready. "Why," asked they, "are the bones of an ass clean and those of the high priest, John Hyrcanus, unclean?" "It is the kind of bone that determines the uncleanness," answered the Sadducees, "else we would make spoons of the bones of our relatives!" "Just so," retorted the Pharisees, "it is the value we attach to the Scriptures which has made us decide that they defile the hands, while Homer does not." They worshipped the letter, but misconceived the essence of Scripture: treated morality as a trifle, and trifles as the only religion. In their early days, fired by a true zeal for God; they had degenerated, as a body, into mere "actors." "There were

plenty of Pharisees," says even Jost, himself a Jew, "who used the appearance of piety as a cloak for shameful ends." Nor did this escape the people, especially as these hypocrites sought to attract attention by exaggerated displays, and contemptuous bynames were presently given them. The name of Pharisee came to be like that of Jesuit in the mouth of friends or opponents. Even Philo does not mention it, and it soon died out of the mouth of the people, and survived only as a term of the schools.

With a system so utterly hollow, and yet so deeply rooted in popular favour, Jesus could hold no terms. With the better side of Pharisaism He had much in common, but, as it showed itself, in its growing corruption, He could only condemn it. Zealots for words and forms; lofty in abstract views; the mouthpiece of the nation at large, in its religious and political aspirations, there must have been little real soundness in a body at large, of which a spirit so gentle as that of Christ could speak as whited sepulchres and a generation of vipers.

To illustrate His meaning, Jesus proceeds to give examples of Pharisaic abuse of the Law, holding up what is implied in its due observance, that He may show how it was broken by its professed zealous defenders. The sublime morality of the New Kingdom, with its lofty spiritualization of the Law, is, He implies, the true conservatism—it is His opponents who are undermining it.

The Mosaic prohibition of murder had been limited by the Rabbis to literal homicide, and they had added to the brief words of the Law, that the criminal was in danger of the judgment of God, in some cases, and of the Sanhedrim in others. But this did not satisfy the high spirituality of the New Kingdom. It included in the brief utterance of God, through Moses, a condemnation even of angry words or thoughts. "I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother will be liable to the judgment of God; and whosoever shall express contempt for his brother, will be liable to the Sanhedrim; and whosoever shall say, Thou worthless one, will be liable to hell fire. I go beyond the Scribes, for I declare, as the fulfiller of the Law, that unrighteous anger is worthy of the full punishment they attach to its overt result in homicide; nay, more, I declare the expression of such anger in bitter words as incurring the danger of hell. Not to love one's 'brother' is, with me, the essence of the crime condemned by the Law: the lesser expressions of anger I denounce as worthy of divine, though temporal punishment; in the worst cases, as worthy of punishment in the world to come." Anger with a brother entails the anger and judgment of God: public reproach merits a public penalty, but he who would consign another to hell is himself in danger of being sent to it. He does not suppose His disciples could possibly commit the crime of murder, or even break into open violence, but He ranks under an equal guilt the passions which lead to them in others. He charges the murder, not against the hand that strikes, but the heart that hates.

This was startling enough, but the application made of it must have sounded no less so. "Only the pure in heart can see God, and hence it is vain for you to seek His presence by an offering, if you have in any way thus offended. If you have, and in the solemn moment of appearing before God remember it,—evil though men think it to break off or interrupt a sacrifice,—leave your offering before the altar; seek him whom you have wronged, and be reconciled to him, and, then, come and offer your gift. You have wronged God, not man only. Beware lest, if you do not make peace with Him, by instant atonement to your brother, He act to you as a creditor does with a debtor he meets in the street—whom he delivers up to the judge, and whom the judge hands over to the officer to cast into prison. I tell you, if God thus let His anger kindle upon you, you will not come out till you have paid the last farthing!"

The Pharisaic doctrine of marriage offences and divorce was next unsparingly condemned, as an inadequate expression of the spirit of the Law. It restricted adultery to the crime itself, and it sanctioned divorce at the mere whim of the husband. Doubtless individual Rabbis represented healthier views than others, but they did not affect the prevailing tone. As with homicide, so, in adultery, the morality of the New Kingdom traced the crime home to the heart, and condemned the unclean glance as a virtual commission of the crime itself. The thoughts were nothing, in the loose morality of the day, but Jesus arraigns the secret lusts of the breast, with an earnestness unknown to the Rabbis. Unconditional self-mortification is to be carried out, when guilty thoughts imperil the soul. "If your right eye," says He, "or your right hand, your sight or your touch, lead you into temptation, it is better for you to pluck out the one, and cut off the other, rather than be led astray, and not only lose a share in my kingdom, but be cast into hell hereafter." Not that He meant this in a hard and literal sense. The sin is with Him, in the heart, but the senses are its instruments, and no guard can be too strict, no self-restraint too great, if they endanger spiritual purity.

The Pharisaic laws of divorce were shamefully loose. "If any one," said the Rabbis, "see a woman handsomer than his wife, he may dismiss his wife and marry that woman," and they had the audacity to justify this by a text of Scripture. Even the strict Schammai held that if a wife went out without being shrouded in the veil which Eastern women still wear, she might be divorced, and hence many Rabbis locked up their wives when they went out! While some held that divorce should be lawful only for adultery, others, like Josephus, claimed the right to send away their wives if they were not pleased with their behaviour. The school of Hillel even maintained that, if a wife cooked her husband's food badly, by over-salting or over-roasting it, he might put her away, and he might also do so if she were stricken by any grievous bodily affliction! The facility of divorce among the Jews, had, indeed, become so great a scandal,

even among their heathen neighbours, that the Rabbis were fain to boast of it as a privilege granted to Israel, but not to other nations!

The woman divorced was at once free to marry, her letter of dismissal, signed by witnesses, expressly granting her the liberty to do so.

Rising high above all this festering hypocrisy, the law of the New Kingdom sounded out, clear and decisive. "It has been said by Moses," continued Jesus, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a bill of divorce. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, causes her to be the occasion of adultery if she marry again, for she is still a wife; and whosoever marries her, when put away, thus commits adultery."

The use of oaths was no less prevalent in Christ's day than it still is in the East, and the Rabbis had sanctioned the practice by laying down minute rules for its regulation. The law of Moses had absolutely forbidden perjury, but the casuistry of the Rabbis had so darkened the whole subject of oaths, that they had, in effect, become utterly worthless. They were formally classed under different heads, in Rabbinical jurisprudence, and endless refinements opened facilities for any one to break them who wished. Their number was endless; men swore by heaven, by the earth, by the sun, by the prophets, by the Temple, by Jerusalem, by the altar, by the wood used for it, by the sacrifices, by the Temple vessels, by their own heads.

By joining a second text, from a different part, to the prohibition of perjury, the Scribes had, in effect, opened the door to every abuse. To the prohibition of Moses, "Thou shalt not swear falsely," they had added the charge, "but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths," and from this it was argued that no oath was binding, either on one's-self or towards others, which had no vow of sacrifice as a part of it, or if the vow had been punctually fulfilled." Any oath, any deception towards God or man, and even perjury itself, was thus sanctioned, if it were only consecrated and purified by an offering. The garrulous, exaggerating, crafty Jew needed to be checked, rather than helped in his untruthfulness, but the guardians of the purity of the Law had invented endless oaths, with minute discriminations, and verbal shades and catches, which did not expressly name God, or the Temple, or the altar, and these the people might use, without scruple, mock oaths, harmless to themselves and of no binding force!

Against such equivocation and consecrated hypocrisy Jesus lifted His voice. "I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; neither by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. You would tremble to swear by God, but when you swear by anything connected with His works or His worship, you swear, in reality, by Himself. Nor shall you swear by your head, for you cannot make a hair of it white or black; and, thus, your oaths by it are idle words. But let your speech be simply yes and no, for what exceeds these is from the

'evil one.' As my disciples, your word is enough: you will speak only as ever in the presence of God."

The theory of life under the New Kingdom, as we have seen, was the very opposite of that held by the schools of the day. Prosperity, with them, was an unbroken enjoyment of life to extreme old age, abundance of worldly comforts, and continuous success in all undertakings, and triumphant victory over all enemies. All this was expected as the just reward of a strict obedience to Rabbinical prescriptions, which constituted the "righteousness of the Law." Jesus held forth the very opposite of all this as the blessedness to be sought in the New Kingdom. Poverty, sorrow, and persecution, were to be the natural lot of His followers, but their transcendent reward, hereafter, and the love which inspired such devotion, transfigured them to gain and honour, and demanded the highest joy.

To make the contrast more vivid between the Old Kingdom and the New, He had added "woes" in connection with all that the former had praised as specially blessed. The rich, who have their reward in their earthly possessions; the prosperous, who cared for nothing except this world, would suffer hunger hereafter; those who cared only for present joy, would one day mourn and weep; those whom men praised, would find the praise only deceiving flattery. Patience, humility, gentleness, resignation, and love, were to characterize the New Israel; the virtues and rewards of the soul; the piety of form and rewards in this world, were discountenanced. The New Kingdom was to win hearts by spiritual attractions, till now little valued.

As a practical application of the ideal, thus sketched, He required His followers to repudiate the Old Testament doctrine of retaliation, with the endless refinements of the Rabbis, and to adopt, in its place, the principle of overcoming evil with good. Antiquity, both Jewish and heathen, cherished the idea of revenge for injuries. To requite like with like was assumed as both just and righteous. Even Socrates had no higher idea of virtue than to surpass friends in showing kindness, and enemies in inflicting hurt. Plato, indeed, held that revenge was wrong, and that no one should do evil on any ground; that it was worse to do wrong than to suffer it, and that the virtuous man would not injure any one, because to do so injured himself. But Plato had only in his mind, in these noble sentiments, the relations of Greek citizens to each other, to the exclusion of slaves, and of all the world but his own race; and the motive for his magnanimity was not love for the individual man, or for ideal humanity, but only political justice and right. Roman stoicism rose higher, but its injunctions of kindness to enemies were rather the expression of self-approving virtue than of loving moral conviction. Among the Jews, retaliation had the sanction of Moses. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe, are required by him. The stern Sadducee party clung to the

letter of the Law, but the milder Pharisees had invented a scale of money payments instead. As in our own middle ages, a tariff of fines was constructed for each personal injury; for tearing the hair, for a cuff on the ear, a blow on the back, spitting on the person, taking away an under garment, uncovering a woman's head, and the like. The value of a hand, or foot, or an eye, was computed by the depreciation it would have made in the value of a slave. A blow on the ear was variously set at the fine of a shilling or a pound: a blow on the one cheek at two hundred zuzees; on both cheeks, at double. To tear out hair, to spit on the person, to take away one's coat, or to uncover a woman's head, was compensated by a payment of four hundred zuzees.

This rude and often mercenary softening of the harshness of the old Law fell wholly below the requirements of the New Kingdom. Its members must suffer wrong patiently, that the conscience of the wrong-doer,—become its own accuser,—might be won to repentance, by the lesson of unresisting meekness. Christ's own divine charity and forgiveness was to be repeated by His followers. Sin was to be conquered by being made to feel the power of goodness. The present was, at best, only a discipline for the future, and the patient endurance of wrong, from Christ-like love and gentleness, was part of the preparation for the pure joys of the Messianic kingdom. "Ye have heard," said He, "that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. But I say unto you, that ye resist not the evil man; but whosoever smites thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him who desires to contend with thee and take thy coat, leave him thy cloak also. And whosoever shall press thee one mile, go with him two. To him that asks thee, give, and from him that desires to borrow of thee, turn not away." The spirit of such injunctions is evident. Hasty retaliation; readiness to stand on one's rights in all cases; deliberate revenge rather than pity, are unworthy a member of the New Kingdom. It is for him to teach by bearing, yielding, and giving, and not by words only. The virtues he commends he is to illustrate. But it is far from the teaching of Christ that law is to cease, or that the evil-doer is to have everything at his mercy. Only, as far as possible, the principle of His kingdom is to be the purest, deepest, self-sacrificing love.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (*Concluded*).

JESUS had led His audience step by step to higher and higher conceptions, and now, by an easy transition, raised them to the highest of all.

The character of any religion depends on its idea of God. The Jews had no loftier thought of Him than as a national deity, the Father of Israel and of its proselytes, but not the God of the world at large. They looked on Him also as a jealous God, and the Pharisee urged himself to a painful zeal in his fulfilment of the Law by the thought that the sins of the father were visited on the third and fourth generation. If he agonized to carry out a thousand minute prescriptions, if the Essene secluded himself in hurtful loneliness, if the Sadducee toiled to discharge all that was required in the service of the Temple, and in the presentation of offerings, if the people mourned in the apprehension that God had forsaken them, it was because all alike looked up to a Being who, as they believed, required what they could hardly render. They should have drawn other conceptions from their ancient Scriptures, but they did not. They had always learned much that was true and sublime from the Law and the Prophets—the Majesty of God and the dependence of the creature—the dignity of man as the divine image, and the kingly relation of Jehovah to Israel—His son, His first-born, His bride, His spouse. They had never lost the conviction that their nation could not perish, because the honour of God was pledged to defend it, and they even looked forward, with a frenzied earnestness, to a future when He would send His Messiah, and raise them above all the nations. As Jews, many doubtless drew comfort from the divine words, that, like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. But their theology had sunk to a mere mercenary relation of performance and reward. The idea of a strict return of good for good, or evil for evil, extended to the next world as well as this, and at the best, God was only the Father of Israel, not of mankind. Still, above all, the Master, looking for service from man as the servant—the fond thought of His fatherhood, even in its limited national sense, grew more and more common as Christ's day grew near. The Jew was being educated for the divine announcement of the whole truth.

The heathen world, also, had long been unconsciously preparing for its proclamation. Greek philosophy had spoken of the Father of gods and men. Man was the divine image and of divine origin—the friend, the fellow-citizen, the emanation, the Son, of God. In an insincere age, when fine words were used as mere rhetorical flourishes,

springing from no conviction or earnestness, Seneca, a generation later, was able to speak almost like a Christian. "The gods," said he, "are full of pity and friendliness—do everything for our good, and for our benefit have created all kinds of blessings, with exhaustless bounty, and prepared everything for us beforehand. What they have they make over to us: that is how they use things; and they are unwearied, day and night, dispensing their benefits as the protectors of the human race. We are loved by them as children of their bosom, and, like loving parents, they smile at the faults of their children, and cease not to bestow kindness on kindness to us; give us before we ask, and continue to do so, although we do not thank them, and even though we cry out defiantly, 'I shall take nothing from them; let them keep what they have for themselves!' The sun rises over the unjust, and the seas spread out even for sea robbers. The gods are easily appeased, never unforgiving; how unfortunate were we if they were not so!" Thus also "The way of man, in which the god-like walks, goes upwards to the gods, who reach out the hand to us without pride or jealousy, to help us to rise. We need no temple, nor even to lift up our hands to heaven: God is near thee; the Holy Spirit, the Watcher over good or evil, who ever, unweariedly, leads us to God." Words like these sound Christian, though we know that they were only artificial rhetoric, composed to turn aside the charge of worshipping stocks and stones. Faith in the divinity often gives way, in Seneca, before haughty pride in humanity, and that pride, in turn, sinks before the dark future. The fancy played over the dark abyss with empty words of comfort, respecting the father-like gods and god-like man, but even prosperity could hardly amuse itself with them, and the hour of trial repeated them with hollow laughter and self-murder. Yet they were there to use for the highest good, had men chosen. The religous education of the world had gradually, through long ages, become ready for the teachings of Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount was spoken while every sign of the wrath of God with the nation lay like a burden on all, and perplexed the masters in Israel. Yet it was then that Jesus revealed that God was the Father of men, and had loved them from the beginning of the world, appealing for proof even to the lilies of the field and the birds of the air. For the first time, men heard that the whole race were the sons of the great heavenly Father; that the world lay in the sunshine of His eternal love, and that all alike were invited to seek His face. It was the first proclamation of a universal religion, and, as such, an event unique in the history of mankind. In the early ages of the world, war was perpetual. Even after men had long adopted city life and its civilization, a stranger and an enemy were synonymous. Thus, in the first ages of Rome, a stranger who had not put himself formally under the protection of some Roman, had no rights and no protection. What the Roman citizen took from him was as lawful gain as the shell which no one owned, picked up on the sea-

shore. He was like a wild beast, to be hunted and preyed on at any one's will. To use Mommsen's figure, a tribe or people must be either the anvil or the hammer. Ulysses was only the type of the world at large in his day, when, in the early part of his wanderings, he landed in Thrace, and having found a city, instantly sacked it and killed all the inhabitants. Where there was no express treaty, plunder and murder were always to be dreaded. The only safety of individuals or communities was their own capacity of self-defence. As tribes and clans expanded to nations, the blood connection secured peace, more or less, in the area they occupied, and, ultimately, the interests of commerce, or the impulse of self-perservation, joined even states of different nationalities in peaceful alliances. Isolated nations, like the Jews, still kept up the intense aversion to all but their own race, but the progress of the world made them more and more exceptional.

Before the age of Christ, the conquests of Rome had broken down the dividing walls of nationality over the civilized earth, and had united all races under a common government, which secured a wide-spread peace, hitherto unknown. Men of races living far apart found themselves free to compete for the highest honours of public life or of letters, and Rome accepted emperors and men of genius, alike, from the obscure populations of the provinces.

But though conquest had forced the nations into an outward unity, there was no real fusion or brotherhood. Man, as man, had gained nothing. The barbarian and the slave were no less despised than before, and had gained no more rights. The Romans had been forced, for their own sakes, to raise the conquered to more or less political equality with themselves, but they did so from no sentiment of respect to them as fellow-men, and still bore themselves towards them with the same haughty superiority and ill-concealed aversion. It was the peace of political and even moral death. All mankind had become the slaves of the despot on the Tiber. Ancient virtues had passed away, and vice and corruption, unequalled, perhaps, in any age, lay like a deadly miasma over universal society. The union of the world was regretted, as superseding the times when Rome could indulge its tastes in war and plunder. It was a political comprehension, not a moral federation. The hostility of the past was impossible, but the world had only become a mob, not a brotherhood, of nations, and had sunk in morality, as it had advanced in outward alliance.

With the Jews, the old hatred of all races but their own had grown with the calamities of the nation. It seemed to them a duty to hate the heathen and the Samaritan, but their cynicism extended, besides, to all respecting whom the jealousy for the honour of the Law had raised suspicion. They hated the publicans; the Rabbi hated the priest, the Pharisee the Sadducee, and both loathed and hated the common people, who did not know the ten thousand injunctions of

the schools. They had forgotten what the Old Testament taught of the love of God towards men, and of the love due by man to his fellow. They remembered that they had been commanded to show no favour to the sunken nations of Canaan, but they forgot that they had not been told to hate them. The Law had said "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" but their neighbour, they assumed, meant only a Jew or a proselyte, and they had added that they should "hate their enemies." "If a Jew see a Gentile fall into the sea," wrote Maimonides, still cherishing the old feeling centuries later, "let him by no means take him out; for it is written, 'Thou shalt not rise up against the blood of thy neighbour,' but this is not thy neighbour." The spirit of revenge which prevailed, embittered even private life among the Jews themselves. Each had his own enemies, whom he felt free to hate and to injure, and all, alike, hated whole classes of their own nation, and the whole heathen races.

Jesus was, now, by a simple utterance, to create a new religious era. "Ye have heard," said He, "that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, and pray for them who persecute you; that ye may become sons of your Father, who is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and good, and sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? (in my kingdom). Do not even the (hated) publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye that exceeds? Do not even the (heathen) Gentiles the same thing? Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

It was a new era for man. Heathenism had fine sentiments, but they were supported by no high morality, and no living hopes. The Old Testament often commended kindness and mercy, but it also sanctioned revenge and triumph over the fall of an enemy, and, even in the most attractive passages, it seemed as if piety were expected to make the anger of God on one's adversaries the more certain. But Jesus throws down the dividing prejudices of nationality, and teaches universal love without distinction of race, merit, or rank. A man's neighbour, henceforth, was every one who needed help, even an enemy. All men, from the slave to the highest, were sons of one Father in heaven, and should feel and act towards each other, as brethren. No human standard of virtue would suffice: no imitation of the loftiest examples among men. Moral perfection had been recognized, alike by heathen and Jews, as found only in likeness to the divine, and *that* Jesus proclaims as, henceforth, the one ideal for all humanity. With a sublime enthusiasm and brotherly love for the race, He rises above His age, and announces a common Father of all mankind, and one grand spiritual ideal in resemblance to Him.

With this grand truth of Christianity the relation of man to His maker was entirely changed. The love of a child to a father took the place of fear, as a motive to His service. A new spiritual king-

dom of filial love and obedience was called into being, with filial yearnings after Him, and childlike devotion to His will—a kingdom in which the humble, the meek, and the merciful found their heaven, and in which all who hungered and thirsted after righteousness felt that they could be satisfied. The pure in heart were, as such, its citizens; the souls who love the things of peace were called its children, and those who bore presecution and sorrow for the sake of righteousness were to inherit it.

To be "perfect as the great Father in heaven is perfect," is to do God's will on earth as the angels do it above, and, hence, the new kingdom is thus spoken of elsewhere. It was to be wholly spiritual, in contrast to the political dreams of the Pharisees. They had transformed the predictions of the prophets to a political programme, which should be realized by war against Rome, and zealous agitation against the Sadducean aristocracy. They thought of another Maccabæan war, to be followed by a revelation of the Messiah from heaven. The kingdom of Jesus, on the contrary, was not to rise like a State, so that men could say it was here, or there, because it was already in their midst. It could not be otherwise. He had proclaimed that God was the great Father, and, as such, the loving, filial desire that they might be His children thrust aside the cold thought of reward, which had hitherto ruled. He proclaimed that God loved them, not in return for their services, but from the love and tenderness of a Father's heart, which sent forth His sun over good and bad alike, and rejoiced more over a sinner's repentance than over the weary exactness in Rabbinical rules of fifty who thought themselves righteous. The fundamental principle of the Judaism of the day was undermined by the new doctrine. What need was there longer for offerings, for Temple ritual, for washings or fastings, or scrupulous tithings, when the great Father sought only the heart of His penitent child? The hope of the Rabbis that they could hold God to the fulfilment of what they thought His promises, if only the Mosaic ideal of the theocracy, in their sense, was restored, fell to the ground. The isolation of the Jews, and their glory as the chosen people of God, were things of the past. One part of the theocracy after the other was doomed to fall before this grand proclamation, for its foundations were sapped. The Fatherhood of God, which now falls like an empty sound on the ear of the multitude, was, at its utterance, the creation of a new world.

Jesus had, now, set forth the characteristics of citizenship in His new kingdom, and the new law; He passed, next, to the new life. A warning was needed to guard His followers, in their religious duties, from the abuses of the Rabbinical party.

Almsgiving had been exalted by the Scribes to an act in itself meritorious before God. The words "alms," and "righteousness," were, indeed, used interchangeably. "For one farthing given to the poor," said the Rabbis, "a man will receive heaven." The words,

"I shall behold Thy face in righteousness," were rendered in the gloss "because of alms." "This money," said others, "goes for alms, that my sons may live, and that I may obtain the world to come." "A man's table now expiates by alms, as the altar, heretofore, did by sacrifice." "He who gives alms will be kept from all evil." In an age when the religious spirit was dead, outward acts of religion were ostentatiously practised, at once to earn a reward from God, and to secure honour for holiness from men. Religion was acted for gain, either present or future. Against such hopocrisy Jesus warns His followers. "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven." They were to draw no attention to their charity, by having it proclaimed in the synagogue, or by ostentatiously giving it in the streets, to earn praise of men, but were to hide it as if they would not even let their left hand know what their right hand was doing. Sincerity only, gave charity value. The amount was not essential: the spirit was all. Insincerity had no reward but the empty honour from men, got by deceit; sincerity was rewarded by their Father in Heaven, who saw the secret deed.

Even prayer had become a formal mechanical act, prescribed by exact rules. The hours, the matter, the manner, were all laid down. A rigid Pharisee prayed many times a day, and too many took care to have the hours of prayer overtake them, decked in their broad phylacteries, at the street corners, that they might publicly show their devoutness,—or went to the synagogue that the congregation might see it. Nor were they content with short prayers, but lengthened their devotions as if to make a merit of their duration. Instead of this, the members of the new kingdom were to retire to strict secrecy when they prayed, and address their Father who sees in secret, and would reward them hereafter, in the future world, for their sincerity. Nor were they to use the foolish repetitions in vogue with the heathen, who thought they would be heard for their much speaking. The great Father knows what we need before we ask Him, and requires no lengthened petitions. Prayer in the congregation is not forbidden, for Jesus Himself frequented the synagogue, and joined in public devotions. But private prayer must be private, to guard against human weakness corrupting it into worthless parade. The simplest, shortest prayer, unheard by human ear, is accepted of God, if it rise from the heart: if the heart be wanting, all prayer is mere form.

It is always much easier, however, to follow a pattern than a precept, and, hence, Jesus proceeded to set before them a model prayer. "After this manner, therefore, pray ye. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts (to Thee), as we, also, have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

He added that our being forgiven our trespasses by God depended on our forgiving men theirs against us.

It was the custom of every Rabbi to teach his disciples a form of prayer, and in "The Lord's Prayer," Jesus, as John already had done, followed the example. But what a difference between His model and that of other teachers! He had created a new heaven, and a new earth, for the soul, and in this prayer the mighty revelation of the Fatherhood of God shines, like a sun, over all humanity. The highest conceivable ideal of perfection and felicity for the race, is offered in the will of the Eternal Father being done on earth as it is in heaven. Childlike trust and dependence ask, and are contented with, daily bounty from that Father's hand. His mercy is pleaded by hearts that already have learned to show it to others. The spirit stands before Him clothed in humility, and full of love and tenderness towards its fellows. Conscious weakness stretches out its hand for heavenly help, distrusting itself, but strong in a Higher. Each clause, almost each word, is full of the deepest significance. Each is filled with divine light. After eighteen centuries, Christendom knows no expression of thoughts and feelings so full in so small a compass, so rich, so majestic in praise and petition. Hallowed phrases, current in His day, may be quoted as parallels of single parts, but He alone united them to words of His own with a breadth and solidity, a childlike simplicity and wisdom, a strength and lowliness wholly unknown in Jewish literature.

Fasting had become one of the prominent religious usages of our Saviour's day. Though only one fast had been appointed by Moses —that of the Day of Atonement—the Pharisees had added numerous others, especially on the two days of the week, Monday and Thursday, on which synagogue worship was held. When fasting, they strewed their heads with ashes, and neither washed nor anointed themselves nor trimmed their beards, but put on wretched clothing, and showed themselves in all the outward signs of mourning and sadness used for the dead. Insincerity made capital of feigned humiliation and contrition, till even the Roman theatre noticed it. In one of the plays of the time, a camel, covered with a mourning cloth, was led on the stage. "Why is the camel in mourning?" asked one of the players. "Because the Jews are keeping the Sabbath year, and grow nothing, but are living on thistles. The camel is mourning because its food is thus taken from it." Rabbis were forbidden to anoint themselves before going out, and it was recorded of a specially famous doctor, that his face was always black with fasting. All pretence was abhorrent to the soul of Jesus, especially in religion. "When *ye* fast," said He, "be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But do thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head and wash thy face; that thou mayest not appear unto men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret, and

thy Father, who sees in secret, will reward thee." To seek effect, applause, credit, or gain, by a show of godliness, must be shunned by members of the New Kingdom. It would be better to let men think evil of them, than to be tempted to use religion for ulterior ends. True pain and true sorrow hide from the eye of strangers; they withdraw to the secrecy of the breast.

He had already spoken of the need of care in the right use of the blessings of life, but He knew our proneness to forget, and returns to the subject once more. "Heap not up for yourselves," said He, "treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But treasure up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For, if your treasure is on earth, your heart must needs be careless of heaven. But if it be in heaven, your hearts will be there also. To have it there, you must have the inner light in your souls,—your mind and heart—by which you perceive and cherish the truth—unclouded. If they be darkened, it will turn your heart away from the right and divine. The body without the eye is in darkness; for light enters only by the eye, as from a lamp. When your eye is sound, your body is full of light; when it is darkened, all within is night. So is it with the eye of the soul."

"Do not fancy," He continued, "that you can join the striving for riches and for the kingdom of God. They are absolutely opposed. No man can serve two masters whose interests are opposite. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot worship the God of heaven, and Mammon, the god of riches. To serve God, and yet make money your idol, is impossible! They are opposites!"

"An undivided heart, which worships God alone, and trusts Him as it should, is raised above anxiety for earthly wants. Therefore, I say unto you, Be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air; they sow not, neither reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you, by anxious thought, can add one cubit to the length of his life? And about raiment why are ye anxious? Consider the lilies of the field, how fair and beautiful they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon, in his royal robes, was not arrayed like one of these. And if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into an oven, will He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Be not, therefore, anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we put on? For the Gentiles seek after all these things. But your Heavenly Father knows that ye have need of them. Seek, first, His kingdom and righteousness, and they shall all be added to you. Be not, therefore, anxious for the morrow. The morrow will have its

own cares. Each day's evil is sufficient for the day." He enjoins not idle indifference and easiness of temper, but the freedom from care of a soul which firmly trusts in the Providence of God. The citizens of the New Kingdom might well confide in their Heavenly Father, and amidst all the trials and straits even of such a martyr life as had been predicted for them, might and should retain calm and unshaken confidence in the sustaining and guiding wisdom and love of God. As His children, they had an express right to look for His all-sufficient care.

No vice was more rank among the Jews, through the influence of their priestly and Rabbinical leaders, than narrow bigotry, which condemned all opinions varying in the least from their own. They were trained to take it for granted that their whole religious system, in its minutest forms and rules—their religious thought, faith, and life—had been revealed by God from heaven. They were a nation of fanatics, ready to fight to the death for any one of the ten thousand ritual injunctions of their religious teachers. A discourse designed to proclaim the advent, character, and laws of the new theocracy, could not close without touching on the duties of social life, and laying down principles for guidance. He had enjoined the broad law of gentle love, as the rule for intercourse with men at large. He now illustrates it in additional applications.

"Judge not," said He, "that ye be not judged (by God); condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven. For with what judgment ye judge (men) ye shall be judged (hereafter). Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will they give into your bosom. For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. Be charitable respecting the errors and shortcomings of others, that you may not have your own sins brought against you at the great day, and find there the condemnation you have yourself shown here. It is a fearful thing for you, who are to teach men, to fall away from the truth, for how, then, will you instruct sinful men aright? If the blind attempt to lead the blind both fall into a ditch, and if you yourselves be wrong you cannot lead others, who know nothing of it, to the salvation of the New Kingdom. You will both go more and more hopelessly wrong, till, at last, you sink into Gehenna. Those you teach cannot be wiser than you, their teachers, for a disciple is not above his master, but comes, at best, in the end, to be like him. If, then, you would not be blind leaders of the blind, take care, before you essay to judge and better the religious state of others, to examine your own spiritual condition, and reform whatever is wrong in it. Why should you mark the atom of straw or dust that is in your brother's eye—his petty fault—if you do not, in your self-righteousness, see the beam that is in your own eye? Self-blinded hypocrite! first cast the beam out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to cast the mote out of your brother's eye."

"You will meet with men," He continued, who, when the divine truth is offered them, will only profane it—men utterly ungodly and hardened, who wilfully reject the counsel of God, with blasphemy, mocking, and slandering. Do not put it in their power to dishonour it. To do so is like casting a holy thing to the street dogs, or throwing pearls before wild swine, who would only trample them as worthless under their feet, and turn against yourselves and rend you."

"You will need help from God in your great task; for your own spiritual welfare, and for success in your work. Ask, therefore, and it will be given you; seek, and ye will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds, and to him that knocks it shall be opened. If your son ask bread, do you mock him by giving him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, do you mock him by giving him a serpent? or, if he ask an egg, will you give him a scorpion? You need, then, have no fear of refusal of spiritual help from your Heavenly Father, for if you who are sinful, though members of the New Kingdom, would not think of refusing to supply the wants of your children, far less will your Father above refuse you, His spiritual children, what you need."

Jesus had now come to the close of His exposition of the nature and duties of His kingdom, and ended His statement of them by a brief recapitulation and summary of all He had said of the latter, in their relation to men at large. "All things, therefore, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye also so to them, for this is the law and the prophets." The Law had said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," but it had meant by neighbour a Jew or a proselyte, and had commanded the extirpation of the Canaanites, and sanctioned merciless war with the heathen around. These grand words were, therefore, a rule for the nation towards its own members, but no great law for mankind. But Jesus ignores this narrowness, and proclaims all men brethren, as common children of one Father in Heaven. This golden rule had been proclaimed more or less fully before. It is found in Socrates and Menander, and even in the Chinese classics. Philo quotes, as an old Jewish saying, "Do not to others what you would be unwilling to suffer;" and the book of Tobit enjoins, "Do that to no man which thou hatest." In the generation before Jesus it had been repeated by Hillel to a heathen, who mockingly asked him if he could teach him the whole Law while he stood on one foot. "What you would not like done to yourself, do not to thy neighbour," replied the Rabbi—"this is the whole Law: all the rest is a commentary on it—go learn this." But, as Hillel gave it, this noble answer was only misleading. It was striking to find a Rabbi with such enlightened insight into the essence of the Law as to see that all its ordinances and rites had a moral end, but the Law was much more than a mere code of morals between man and man. Its fitting summary is much rather that central requirement repeated each day, even till now, by every Jew in his prayers—"Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Morality, apart from its religious basis and supreme enforcement, degrades the Law to a level with the common morality of the world at large It was reserved for Jesus to announce our duty to man in its subordination to our higher relation to God; to make it only part of that filial love which reflects the tenderness on all our brethren which it feels supremely towards their Father and ours, in Heaven. With Him, love of universal humanity has its deep religious ground in the love of God whom we are to resemble,—towards all the race, as His children. The love of man, He tells us, is the second great commandment; not the first; itis the moon shining by light borrowed from that Sun. The highest of the Rabbis cannot stand in the presence of the Son of Mary!

He had reached His peroration. It remained only to add solemn warnings, and these He now gave. "Enter in," said He, "through the narrow gate, for narrow is the gate and straitened is the way of self-denial and struggle that leads to life, and few there are that find it. But wide is the gate and broad is the way of sin that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. Beware of false teachers, who would turn you aside from the safe road. They will come to you affecting to be my followers, but they will be only wolves in sheep's clothing. You will know them fully by their fruits—that is, by their lives. Do men gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles? So, every good tree brings forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit. The good, out of the good treasure of the heart, bring forth that which is good; and the evil man, out of the evil, brings forth that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Have nothing to do with them, and do not follow them, for every tree that brings not forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. So, then, by their fruits ye will know them fully."

"Nor is the danger of being led astray by false teachers light, for not all who acknowledge me as their Master will enter into the glory of the heavenly Kingdom, but those only who do the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not teach in Thy name confessing Thee as Jesus Messias, and by the power of Thy name cast out devils, and, by the same power, did we not do many mighty works, owning Thee, and working through Thee, in all things?' And then shall I say unto them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' Take warning, for even some of you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say."

That one in the position of Jesus, an unknown Galilæan; untrained in the schools; in early manhood; with no support from the learned or the powerful, should have used such words, in a discourse so transcendently lofty in its teachings, is to be explained only on the ground

that He spoke with a divine consciousness of being the Messiah, who should hereafter be the Judge of mankind. He calmly founds a kingdom in which the only rewards and punishments are those of the conscience here, and those of eternity, after death. He bears Himself, and speaks, as a King; supersedes or perfects the laws of the existing theocracy as He thinks best; invites adherents, but warns off all except the truly godly and sincere, by holding out the most discouraging prospects through life; keeps aloof from the civil or ecclesiastical authorities, and acts independently of both. Finally, as the one law of His invisible kingdom in the souls of men, He requires supreme love and devotion to Himself, and demands that this be shown by humble and continuous efforts after likeness to God, and by the imitation of His own pure and universal love to mankind. To have conceived a spiritual empire so unique in the history of religion, is to have proved His title to His highest claims.

His concluding words are in keeping with these. He had announced that He would judge the world at the great day, and now makes hearty acceptance and performance of His commands the condition of future salvation or ruin. "Every one, therefore (now, or hereafter), who hears these sayings of mine and obeys them, is like a man, who, in building a house, digged deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock. And the winter rains fell, and the torrents rose, and the storms blew, and beat upon that house, and did not shake it, because it was well built, and had been founded upon the rock. But every one who hears them, and does not obey them, is like a foolish man, who, without a foundation, built his house upon the sandy earth. And the rain descended, and the torrents rushed down, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and straightway it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

No wonder that when He had finished such an address, the multitudes were astonished at His teaching. They had been accustomed to the tame and slavish servility of the Rabbis, with their dread of varying a word from precedent and authority; their cobwebbery of endless sophistries and verbal trifling; their laborious dissertations on the infinitely little; their unconscious oversight of all that could affect the heart; their industrious trackings through the jungles of tradition and prescription; and felt that in the preaching of Jesus, they, for the first time, had something that stirred their souls, and came home to their consciences. One of the Rabbis had boasted that every verse of the Bible was capable of six hundred thousand different explanations, and there were seventy different modes of interpretation current, but the vast mass of explanations and interpretations were no better than pedantic folly, concerning itself with mere insignificant minutiæ which had no bearing on religion or morals. Instead of this, Jesus had spoken as a legislator, vested with greater authority than Moses. To transmit, unchanged, the traditions received from the past, was the one idea of all other teachers; but He, while reverent,

was not afraid to criticize, to reject, and to supplement. To venture on originality, and independence was something hitherto unknown.

The life of Jesus, in all its aspects, is the great lesson of humanity: His death is its hope. But there lies a wondrous treasure in His words. What but a pure and sinless soul could have conceived such an idea of God as the Father of mankind, drawing us to Himself by the attraction of holy and exhaustless love? "It could only rise," says Hausrath, "in a spirit that stood pure, guiltless, and sinless before God—a spirit in which all human unrest and disturbance were unknown, on which there lay no sense of the littleness of life, no distracting feeling of disappointed ambition. Sinful man, with a stained or even uneasy conscience, will always think of God as jealous, wrathful, and about to avenge Himself. The revelation that God is the Father of men could rise only in a mind in which the image of God mirrored itself in calm completeness, because the mirror had no specks to mar it. The revelation of God as the Father is the strongest proof of the absolute perfection of the human nature in Jesus."

"He has left us not only a life, but a rich world of thoughts," says Keim, "in which all the best inspirations and longings of mankind meet and are reflected. It is the expression of the purest and directest truths which rise in the depths of the soul, and they are made common to all mankind by being uttered in the simplest and most popular form."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OPEN CONFLICT.

Jesus had now been some months in Galilee, and the season of the great feasts had returned. It was meet that Judea, which had rejected Him when He first preached in it, should be once more visited, and the news of the Kingdom once more sent abroad among the throngs of pilgrims from every part of the world, attracted at such times to Jerusalem.

Leaving the north, therefore, for a time, He again journeyed south; perhaps by short stages, preaching as He went; perhaps with one of the bands of pilgrims which gathered from each neighbourhood to go up to "the House of the Lord." No voice would join with so rapt a devotion in the joyful solemnities of such a journey,—in the psalms that enlivened the way,—or the formal devotions of morning and evening. But what feast it was He thus honoured is not told, nor are there means for deciding. That of Purim, a month before the Passover, the Passover itself, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, have each found favour on plausible grounds, but where there is such contrariety of opinion, the safest course is to leave the matter unsettled.

Of the visit we know only one incident, but it was the turning point in the life of our Lord.

Jerusalem in those days was a contrast in its water supply, as in much else, to the fallen glory of its present condition. Several natural springs seemed to have flowed in the city or near it, in ancient times, but they have long been choked up, with the exception of the single "Fountain of the Virgin," still found in the Kedron valley. There is now, besides, only a single well—that of Joab, at the junction of the Kedron and Hinnom valleys, near Siloam, south-east from the town. It was doubtless used in Christ's day, and it is still one of the principal sources of summer supply for Jerusalem, though, like everything else, under the withering spell of Turkish rule, it is in such disrepair that its water, drawn from a depth of 125 feet, is tainted with sewage. The ancient supply, however, seems to have been mainly obtained by collecting the rain water in pools and cisterns, and by aqueducts which drained distant hills, and brought abundance into the various public pools and reservoirs of the city and Temple, the space beneath which was honeycombed by immense rock hewn cisterns. Many houses, also, had cisterns, hewn in the rock, in the shape of an inverted funnel, to collect the rain, but it was from the numerous "pools" that the public supply was mainly derived. Eight still remain, in greater or less extreme decay, and there appear to have been at least three others, in ancient times.

One of the most famous of these, in Christ's day, was known as the Pool of Bethesda, which recent explorations appear to have rediscovered at the north-west corner of the Temple enclosure. If the identification be valid, the pool was a great reservoir, 165 feet in length, hewn in the limestone rock to a breadth of 48 feet, and divided in halves by a pier of masonry 5 feet thick, built across it. Water still enters it from the north-west corner, and is probably an abundant spring, though now so mixed with drainage as to be unfit for drinking. Eusebius speaks of the Bethesda of his day as "twin pools, one of which is filled by the rains of the year, but the other has water tinged in an extraordinary way with red." This effect was likely produced by the rapid influx of water through underground channels, after heavy rains. It is said by St. John to have been close to the "Sheep Gate"—the entrance, doubtless, of the numerous flocks for the Temple market.

Bathing in mineral waters has, in all ages, been regarded as one of the most potent aids to recovery from various diseases, and in the East, where water is everything, this belief has always prevailed. The Pool of Bethesda, from whatever cause, was in especial favour for its curative powers, which were supposed to be most effective when the waters were "troubled," either by the discoloration after heavy rains, or by periodical flowing after intermission, as is still the case with the Fountain of the Virgin, near Siloam.

Natural explanations of ordinary phenomena were unknown in

these simple times, for there was no such thing as science. Among the Jews, as among other races, everything was attributed to the direct action of supernatural beings. In the Book of Jubilees, which shows the popular ideas of Christ's day, there are angels of adoration, of fire, wind, clouds, hail, hoar frost, valleys, thunder, lightning, winter, spring, summer, and autumn, and of "all things in the heavens and earth, and in all valleys; of darkness, of light, of dawn, and of evening." The healing powers of the Bethesda waters were, hence, ascribed to periodical visits of an angel, who "troubled the water." Popular fancy had, indeed, created a complicated legend to account for the wonder. At least as far back as the days of Nehemiah, the ebbing and flowing of some springs had been ascribed to a great dragon which lived at the source, and drank up the waters when it woke, leaving them to flow only while it was asleep. It was even said that a good angel dwelt beside healing springs, and each morning gave them their virtue afresh, and a Rabbi had gone so far as to report that, as he sat by a fountain, the good angel who dwelt in it appeared to him, and said that a demon was trying to get into it, to hurt those who frequented it. He was, therefore, to go and tell the townsfolks to come with hammers, or iron rods or bars, and beat the water till it grew red with thick drops of blood—the sign that the demon was conquered and slain.

Some such fanciful notions, based, very probably, on real curative powers in the water at certain seasons, attracted daily to Bethesda a multitude of unfortunates who hoped to be healed of blindness, atrophy, lameness, and other infirmities, by bathing at the right moment a sufficient number of times. Charity had built five porches round the pool, to afford the crowd a shelter, and these, and the great steps leading down to the waters, were constantly thronged, like the steps of a sacred bathing-place to-day, on the Ganges.

Among the sufferers was one who had been helplessly crippled by rheumatism or paralysis for thirty-eight years, but still clung to the hope that he would, one day, be healed. He had, apparently, had himself brought from a distant part, for he had no friends on the spot, and, hence, had the pain of many times seeing others, less helpless, crowd into the waters, while he lay on his mat for want of some pitying aid.

Jesus had every motive, at this time, to avoid attracting attention in Jerusalem, for it might rouse the open hostility of the Church authorities, which already only waited an opportunity. The pitiful plight of the sufferer, however, awoke His compassion, and in sympathy for his story, though without committing Himself to his notions, he healed him by a word, telling him to "rise, take up his sleeping-mat, and walk."

The common feelings of humanity, one might have thought, would have followed an act so tender and beautiful, with admiration and hearty approval. But there is no crime that may not be done by fa-

naticism allied to religious opinions; no deadness to true religion too profound for the championship of fancied orthodoxy. Pity, charity, recognition of worth, or nobleness of act or word, give place to remorseless hatred and bloodthirsty vengeance where there is religious hatred. Inquisitors who sent thousands to the stake for an abstract proposition, or immured them in dungeons, and feasted on their torture for incapacity to repeat some wretched Shibboleth, have been amiable and gentle in all other relations. The hierarchical party in Jerusalem comprised men of all dispositions, and of every shade of sincerity, and its opposite. But it had been touched in its tenderest susceptibilities by the preaching of the Baptist; for it had been called to account, and had had its shortcomings held up before the nation. The instinct of self-preservation, and the conservatism of a priestly and legal order, were instantly roused, and assailed the Reformer with the cry that the Law and the Temple were in danger. The Baptist had already fallen; most likely by their help; but a successor more to be dreaded, had risen in Jesus. They had watched His course in Galilee with anxiety, which had already shown itself during His first short visit to Jerusalem at the Passover before, and in His subsequent circuits through Judea. Spies, sent from Jerusalem, dogged His steps and noted His words and acts, to report them duly to the ecclesiastical authorities, who had seen more clearly, day by day, that a mortal struggle was inevitable between the old Theocracy and the Innovator. Everything was in their favour. They were in power, and could at any moment bring Him before their own courts on trial, even for life. But they dreaded overt hostility, and for a time preferred to undermine Him secretly, by mooting suspicions among the people of His being a heretic, or affecting to think Him a mere crazed enthusiast. His most innocent sayings were perverted to evil; His purest aims purposely misconstrued. Only the favour of the people, and His own moderation, prudence, and wisdom, warded off open violence.

He had now, however, given a pretext for more decided action than they had yet taken. No feature of the Jewish system was so marked as their extraordinary strictness in the outward observance of the Sabbath, as a day of entire rest. The Scribes had elaborated from the command of Moses, a vast array of prohibitions and injunctions, covering the whole of social, individual, and public life, and carried it to the extreme of ridiculous caricature. Lengthened rules were prescribed as to the kinds of knots which might legally be tied on Sabbath. The camel-driver's knot and the sailor's were unlawful, and it was equally illegal to tie or to loose them. A knot which could be untied with one hand might be undone. A shoe or sandal, a woman's cup, a wine or oil-skin, or a flesh-pot might be tied. A pitcher at a spring might be tied to the body-sash, but not with a cord.

It was forbidden to write two letters, either with the right hand or

the left, whether of the same size or of different sizes, or with different inks, or in different languages, or with any pigment; with ruddle, gum, vitriol, or anything that can make marks; or even to write two letters, one on each side of a corner of two walls, or on two leaves of a writing-tablet, if they could be read together, or to write them on the body. But they might be written on any dark fluid, on the sap of a fruit-tree, on road-dust, on sand, or on anything in which the writing did not remain. If they were written with the hand turned upside down, or with the foot, or the mouth, or the elbow, or if one letter were added to another previously made, or other letters traced over, or if a person designed to write the letter and only wrote two , or if he wrote one letter on the ground and one on the wall, or on two walls, or on two pages of a book, so that they could not be read together, it was not illegal. If a person, through forgetfulness, wrote two characters at different times, one in the morning, the other, perhaps towards evening, it was a question among the Rabbis whether he had or had not broken the Sabbath.

The quantity of food that might be carried on Sabbath from one place to another was duly settled. It must be less in bulk than a dried fig: if of honey, only as much as would anoint a wound; if water, as much as would make eye-salve; if paper, as much as would be put in a phylactery; if ink, as much as would form two letters.

To kindle or extinguish a fire on the Sabbath was a great desecration of the day, nor was even sickness allowed to violate Rabbinical rules. It was forbidden to give an emetic on Sabbath—to set a broken bone, or put back a dislocated joint, though some Rabbis, more liberal, held that whatever endangered life made the Sabbath law void, "for the commands were given to Israel only that they might live by them." One who was buried under ruins on Sabbath, might be dug for and taken out, if alive, but, if dead, he was to be left where he was, till the Sabbath was over.

The holy day began with sunset on Friday, and ended with the sunset of Saturday, but as the disappearance of the sun was the only mark of the time, its commencement was different on a hill-top and in a valley. If it were cloudy, the hens going to roost was the signal. The beginning and close of the Sabbath were announced by a trumpet from the Temple, and in the different towns. From the decline of the sun on Friday, to its setting, was Sabbath-eve, and no work which would continue into the hours of Sabbath, could be done in this interval. All food must be prepared, all vessels washed, and all lights kindled, before sunset. The money gridle must be taken off, and all tools laid aside. "On Friday, before the beginning of the Sabbath," said one law, "no one must go out of his house with a needle or a pen, lest he forget to lay them aside before the Sabbath opens. Every one must also search his pockets at that time, to see that there is nothing left in them with which it is forbidden to go out on the Sabbath." The refinements of Rabbinical casuistry were,

indeed, endless. To wear one kind of sandals was carrying a burden, while to wear another kind was not. One might carry a burden on his shoulder, but it must not be slung between two. It was unlawful to go out with wooden sandals or shoes which had nails in the soles, or with a shoe and a slipper, unless one foot were hurt. It was unlawful for any one to carry a loaf on the public street, but if two carried it, it was not unlawful. The Sabbath was believed to prevail in all its strictness, from eternity, throughout the universe. All the Rabbinical precepts respecting it had been revealed to Jacob from the originals on the tablets of heaven. Even in hell the lost had rest from their torments on its sacred hours, and the waters of Bethesda might be troubled on other days, but were still and unmoved on this.

In an insincere age such excessive strictness led to constant evasions by Pharisees and Sadducees alike. To escape the restrictions which limited a journey on Sabbath to 2,000 cubits from a town or city, they carried food on Friday evening to a spot that distance beyond the walls, and assumed, by a fiction, that this made that spot also their dwelling. They could thus on the Sabbath walk the full distance to it, and an equal distance beyond it, this journey being only the legal distance from the fictitious place of residence! To make it lawful to eat together on the Sabbath the Rabbis put chains across the two ends of a street, in which the members of a special fraternity lived, and called it a single dwelling, while to excuse their carrying the materials of their Sabbath repast to the common hall, they each laid some food in it on Friday evening, to create the fiction of its being part of the common dwelling. The priestly Sadducees, on the other hand, made no scruple to have even the beasts destined for their kitchen driven to their shambles on the Sabbath, on the pretext that their common meals were only a continuation of the Temple service, by which the rest of the Sabbath was not legally broken.

Nor were such equivocations the only liberties taken with the sacred day, for, however uncompromising with others, the Pharisees were disposed to violate the Sabbath laws when occasion demanded. They had one maxim, timidly applied it is true, but still theirs: "The Sabbath is for you, but you are not for the Sabbath;" and another, still bolder, "Make a common day of your Sabbath rather than go to your neighbour for help."

The priests and Rabbis, thus secretly indulgent to themselves, but austerely strict before the world, found an opportunity in the cure at Bethesda for parading their hollow puritanism, and at the same time raising a charge against Jesus, for the man had been healed on the Sabbath, and had been told to carry his sleeping-mat with him to his home. This was enough. Met in the street, carrying his pallet, by one of these purists, he had been reprimanded for doing so as contrary to the Law, and had shielded himself by the command of Him who had miraculously cured him. It was not till some time after,

when Jesus had come upon him in the Temple, that he knew the name of his benefactor, for Jesus had hurried away from the pool, after curing him, to avoid exciting the multitude round.

It seems from the caution given him at this second meeting, to "sin no more, lest something worse should befall him," as if the man had brought his infirmity on himself by misconduct. Nor did his after-conduct do him much credit. He had no sooner discovered the fact than he went to the officials and told who had healed him. From that moment the doom of Jesus was fixed. Pharisee and Sadducee, Rabbi and priest, forgetting their mutual hatreds, caballed, henceforth, to fasten such accusations upon Him as would secure His death, and never faltered in their resolve till they carried it out, two years later, on Calvary.

Jesus seems forthwith to have been for the first time cited before the authorities, on the formal charge of Sabbath-breaking; but His judges were little prepared for the tone of His defence. Left to answer for Himself, He threw the assembly into a paroxysm of religious fury by claiming to work at all times for the good of men, since it was only what God, His Father, had done, notwithstanding the Sabbath Law, from the beginning As His Son, He was as little to be fettered by that Law or subject to it, and was Lord of the Sabbath. The assembly saw what this implied. He had added to His Sabbath desecration the higher crime of blasphemously "making Himself equal with God, by calling Him specially His Father." The excitement must have been great, for Orientals give free vent to their feelings, under any circumstances. Some years after, the same tribunal, with the crowd of spectators, gnashed their teeth at the martyr Stephen in their infuriated bigotry, and cried out with loud voices, and stopped their ears at his words. In all probability a similar storm rose around Jesus now. But He remained perfectly calm, and when silence was in a measure restored, proceeded with His defence against this second charge.

He did not for a moment deny that they were right in the meaning they put on His words, but stated more fully why He used them. It was impossible for Him to act independently of His Father; He could only do so if He were not His Son. There was absolute oneness in the spirit and aim of the works of both, as in those of a son who looks with reverence at the acts of a father, and has no thought but to reproduce them. "My Father, God, in His love for me, the Son, lays ever open before me, in direct self-disclosure, all that He Himself does, that I may do the same. You marvel at my healing the lame man, but the Father will show me greater works than this, that I may repeat them here on earth, and that you may wonder, not in curiosity as now, but in shame at your unbelief."

"Let me tell you," He continued, "what these greater works are. In your Law it is the special prerogative of the Father to awaken and quicken the dead, but it is mine also, for I, the Son, quicken whom I

will. And as to judging men here (as to their spiritual state), it is left to me alone by my Father, that all men may honour me as His representative, as they honour Him. He who does not honour me, the Son, does not honour the Father who sent me. If you wish to know whom I spiritually quicken, they are those who hear my word, and believe Him who sent me, for they have everlasting life even here, and are not under condemnation, but have passed from death to life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the (spiritually) dead will hear my voice—the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it shall live. I thus wake them to life, because the Father has made me the divine fountain of life, as He Himself, the living God, is. He has also given me authority to judge men, because I am the Son of man.

"But marvel not at what I have said of waking and judging the spiritually dead, for I will do yet greater works. I shall one day raise the actually dead from their graves, and will judge them at the great day, raising those that did good in this world to the resurrection of life, and those that did evil to a resurrection of judgment. Nor is there a fear of error, for I can do nothing of myself. I judge as I hear from God, who, in His abiding communion with me, makes known His divine judgment, which, alone, I utter. Hence my judgment cannot err, because I speak only that of God.

"You may say that I am bearing witness respecting myself, and that, therefore, it is of no value, but, if you think thus, there is another that bears witness to me, and ye know that His testimony is true—I mean God. Himself. You sent to John, and he bore witness to the truth. But the testimony I receive is not that of man. I only say these things that you may be saved, by taking John's testimony to heart, and being waked by it to faith in me, and a share in the salvation which, as the Messiah, I offer you. What a wondrous appearance John was! He was a burning and shining lamp, and you wished for a time to rejoice in his light, but when you found that he called you to repentance rather than to national glory and worldly prosperity, you forsook him and became his enemies. The light he shed was not of the kind you desired.

"But I have a witness which is greater than that of John. The work which the Father has given me to bring to completion—the work of founding and raising the new kingdom of God, as His Messiah,—this, in all that it implies of outward and spiritual wonders, bears witness that the Father has sent me. And not only does God Himself testify of me indirectly, by my work as His Messiah He does so directly, in your Scriptures. But ye have not recognized the voice of this testimony, nor realized the image of me it presents. You are spiritually deaf to the one, and blind to the other. Ye have not the true sense of God's word in your consciences, for you do not believe in His Messiah, whom He has sent, and of whom these Scriptures testify. They witness to me as the mediator of eternal life, and, there-

fore, every one who humbly studies them as the guide to that life, will be pointed by them to me. You search the Scriptures professing to wish to find life, and yet refuse to accept me! How self-contradictory and self-condemning!

"I do not reproach you thus, from any feeling of wounded pride, for I care nothing for the applause of men. I do it because I know the ground of your disbelief—you have not the love of God in your hearts. If you had, you would recognize and receive His Son whom He has sent. I have come in my Father's name, as His commissioned representative—the true Messiah—and you have rejected me with unbelieving contempt, but when a false Messiah comes in his own name, you will receive him! It is no wonder you have rejected me, for how is it possible that such as you could believe, who have no higher craving than to give and accept empty earthly honours, and are indifferent to the only true honour that comes from being acknowledged and praised of God?

"You trust in Moses, who, you think, has promised you favour with God, here and hereafter. Beware! there is no need that I should accuse you before my Father, for your unbelief in me. Moses, himself, in the books in which you trust, is your accuser, for if ye had believed His writings ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye be so blinded as neither to see, nor to believe his writings, how will ye believe my words?"

The authorities had never had such a prisoner before them. They knew not what to do with Him, and, in their confusion and utter defeat, could only let Him depart unharmed. They had not yet summoned courage to proceed to open violence.

This was the turning point in the life of Jesus. Till now, He had enjoyed a measure of toleration and even of acceptance, but, henceforth, all was changed. Jerusalem was no longer safe for Him, and, even in Galilee, He was dogged by determined enmity. The shadow of the Cross darkened His whole future career.

Free from His enemies, Jesus appears to have returned at once to Galilee, in the hope, perhaps, that there, far from Jerusalem, with its fierce religious fanaticism and malevolent hypocrisy, He could breathe more freely, in the still and clear air of the hills. But religious hatred is beyond all others intense and persistent. There were Rabbis and priests there, as well as in the south, and they watched His every step.

A fresh occasion for accusation could not be long of rising. He had left Jerusalem immediately after the Passover, and on the Sabbath after the second day of the Feast—or, it may be, a Sabbath later—a new charge was brought against Him. In the short distance which it was lawful to walk on a Sabbath—less than three-quarters of a mile—the path lay through ripening fields of barley—for Nisan, the Passover month, was the ancient Abib, or month of earing, and the first early sheaf was offered on the second day of the Passover. It

was by the Law, and by Eastern custom, free to all to pluck ears enough in a corn-field, or grapes enough from a vine, to supply hunger, and the disciples, as every Oriental still does in the same circumstances, availed themselves of this liberty, plucking some ears of the barley, and rubbing them with their hands as they went on. The field must have been near some town, most likely Capernaum, for a number of people were about, and among others, some spies. It was no wonder both He and the disciples were hungry, for no Jew could break his fast till after the morning service at the synagogue, or take supper till after the evening service, but He had sanctioned two offences against the Sabbath laws. The plucking the ears was a kind of reaping, and the rubbing was a kind of grinding or threshing. Besides, it was required that all food should be prepared on Friday, before sunset, and the rubbing was a preparation. On any other day there would have been no cause of blame, but to break the Sabbath rather than suffer hunger for a few hours, was guilt worthy of stoning. Was it not their boast that Jews were known, over the world, by their readiness to die rather than break the holy day? Every one had stories of grand fidelity to it. The Jewish sailor had refused, even when threatened with death, to touch the helm a moment after the sun had set on Friday, though a storm was raging; and had not thousands let themselves be butchered rather than touch a weapon in self-defence on the Sabbath? The "new doctrine" of Jesus would turn the world upside down if not stopped!

The spies of the hierarchical party, who had seen the offence, at once accused Him for allowing it, but His answer only made matters worse. He reminded them how David, when pressed by hunger, in his flight from Saul, had eaten the holy bread and given it to his followers, though it was not lawful for any but priests to eat it. Did that not show that the claims of nature overrode those of a ceremonial rule? that the necessity of David and his followers was to be considered before the observance of a tradition? The law of nature came from God, the theocratic prohibition was of man. "And have you not read in the Law," added He, "how the priests work at their duties on the Sabbath, and yet are held blameless, though they are in fact breaking the holy day, if your traditions and rules are to be the unbending standard? What is lawful for the servants of the Temple to do on Sabbath must much more be lawful for my servants to do on that day, for I am greater than the Temple. You condemn my disciples because your thoughts are so fixed on outward rites that you have forgotten how God thinks less of them than of acts of mercy. Does He not say, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice?' It is in your want of mercy that you accuse my followers. They have, besides, acted under my authority. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, as even the Pharisees allow, and therefore, in any case, its laws must give way before human necessities. But I, the Son of Man—the representative of man as man—the Messiah

of God—am still higher than any individual man and above all your Sabbath laws."

Such a retort and such transcendent claims may well have startled His accusers, but they only deepened their hatred, for bigotry is blind and deaf to any reason. Charge was being added to charge, accusation to accusation. He had claimed the power to forgive sins; He had associated with publicans and sinners; He had shown no zeal for washings or fasts, and, now, He had, a second time, openly desecrated the Sabbath.

His defence had only made His position towards the Pharisaic laws more antagonistic than ever, for it had denied that they were unconditionally binding. Their authority depended on circumstances: they were not owned as directly divine. God had planted a higher law in the human breast, and the system of the Rabbis must yield before it. He had virtually alleged that the time was come to free Israel from the yoke of traditional observance, and to raise a new spiritual kingdom on the imperishable basis of truly divine law. By their system man was subordinated to the Sabbath, not the Sabbath to man. This harshness was not the design or will of God. The Sabbath had been given by Him for the good of man, and was to be a day of refreshment, peace, and joy, not of pain, sorrow, and terror. Jesus, therefore, proclaimed expressly that man is greater than the Sabbath, in direct contradiction to the Pharisaic teaching, which made the Sabbath of immeasurably greater worth than man. Man, and still more Himself, as the representative of humanity, in its abiding dignity and rights—the Son of Man—is the Lord of the Sabbath. It was a proclamation of spiritual freedom.

The lowering schoolmen of the day, and the priestly party, felt themselves threatened in their most cherished hopes, wishes, and interests. The breach between them and Jesus had been final, since His half-contemptuous words about the old garment and the old bottles. They had marked Him, definitely, as opposed to traditional Rabbinism, as a dangerous agitator, and an enemy of the venerated "Hedge of the Law," the glory of successive generations of Rabbis. The hierarchy would at once have indicted Him publicly, but for His wide popularity; the devotion felt for Him by the multitudes He had healed or comforted; the transparent singleness of His aims and labours; the gentleness and dignity of His character, which enforced reverence; and His divine humility and lowliness of heart, which made Him so unassailable.

The synagogues were, as yet, open to Him, and He still frequented them, for the facilities they offered of teaching the people. Another violation of the Pharisaic laws of the Sabbath soon followed, in one of the services. He had gone to the synagogue, and was teaching in it, when He noticed a man whose right hand, withered by long-standing local paralysis and its consequent atrophy, hung helpless by his side. Meanwhile, the Scribes and other Pharisees, now constantly on

the watch against Him, sat with keen eyes to see if He would venture to break their Sabbath laws once more, by healing the sufferer, who could claim no help till the sacred day was over, as he was in no immediate danger of life. Their fine-spun casuistry had elaborated endless rules for the treatment of all maladies on the sacred day. A person in health was not to take medicine on the Sabbath. For the toothache, vinegar might be put in the mouth, if it were afterwards swallowed, but it must not be spat out again. A sore throat must not be gargled with oil, but the oil might be swallowed. It was unlawful to rub the teeth with sweet spice for a cure, but, if it were done to sweeten the breath, it was permitted. No fomentations, &c., could be put to affected parts of the body. One prohibition I must give in Latin. "Qui pediculum occidit sabb. idem est ac si occideret camelum." The school of Schammai held it unlawful to comfort the sick, or visit the mourner on the Sabbath, but the school of Hillel permitted it.

It was clear, therefore, that, if any cure of the withered hand were attempted, there would be ground for another formal charge of Sabbath-breaking, which brought with it death by stoning.

But Jesus never feared to do right. No thought of self ever came between Him and His witness to the truth. Looking over at His enemies, as they sat on the chief seats, He read their hearts, and felt that fidelity to the very law which His expected action would be held to have broken, demanded that that act be done.

His whole soul was kindled with righteous anger and sorrow at the hardness which forced conscience to be silent, rather than confess the truth. It was needful that such hollowness and wilful perversity should be exposed. As the Son of God—the Messiah—sent to found a kingdom of pure spiritual religion, He felt that the wisdom of the schools, priestly mediation, sacrifices, Temple rites, and Sabbath laws, were only a glittering veil, which shut out the knowledge of eternal truth, alike towards God and towards man. He had taught and healed, announced the kingdom of spirit and truth, cheered the poor, reproved sinners, lifted the humble from the dust, and gathered the godly round Himself. Dull, mechanical obedience to worthless forms; or love, from the fulness of the heart, was now the question, in religion and morals. Should true religion be spread, or error confirmed? Should He silently let blinded men fancy their blind leaders right, or should He brave all, to open their eyes and lead them into the true ways of His Father? Looking at the paralyzed man, He bade him rise from the floor, on which, with the rest of the congregation, he had been sitting, and stand forth in the midst, and, on his doing so, in ready obedience to one so famous, turned once more to the scowling Rabbis on the dais. "Is it lawful on the Sabbath days," He asked them, "to do good, or to do evil, to save life, or to destroy it?" But they held their peace, fearing they might commit themselves by answering without careful reflection. "It is allowa-

ble, is it not," He resumed, "to lay hold on a sheep which has fallen into a pit on the Sabbath day, and help it out? How much then, is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath." "Stretch forth thy hand," said He, continuing, to the sufferer;—and the hand which, till then, had hung wasted and lifeless at his side, was healthy and strong as the other.

Jesus felt the significance of the moment. He felt that the silence of His accusers was not from conviction, but sullen obstinacy, which had shut its ears against the truth. He felt that, between Him and the leaders of the nation, there was henceforth a hopeless separation. They had finally rejected Him, and could henceforward only seek His destruction. Their fanaticism, now fairly roused, forgot all minor hatreds, and united the hostile factions of the nation in common zeal for His destruction. No parties could be more opposed than the nationalists or Pharisees, and the Friends of Rome gathered round Herod Antipas at Tiberias, but they now united to hunt Jesus to the death. The alliance boded the greatest danger, for it showed that, in addition to religious fanaticism, He had now to encounter the suspicion of designing political revolution. The Church and the State had banded together to put "the deceiver of the people" out of the way as soon as possible.

It had been inevitable from the first that it should be so. The Jerusalem party expected the "Salvation of Israel" from the unconditional restoration of the theocracy, with themselves at its head, and from the strictest enforcement of outward legal observances. While the contrast between Judaism and heathenism was, meanwhile, intensified and embittered to the utmost, they hoped before long to crush Rome, or perish in the attempt. They would have greeted any one who proved able to impose their law, in all its strictness, on mankind,—as a deliverer, as the stem from the root of David, as the Saviour and Messiah. In Jesus, on the contrary, there appeared one who, while constraining their wonder at His lofty morality and spiritual greatness, was the very opposite of all they wished and hoped. He claimed to be the Messiah, but His ideal of the Messiahship was the antithesis of that of the Rabbis and priesthood. He had announced Himself as the founder of a new theocracy more spiritual and more holy than that of Moses. He had thrown a new light on the Scriptures: had revealed God in a new aspect—as no mere national deity, but the Father of all mankind, and He had taught the most startling novelties as to the freedom of the individual conscience. The Rabbis had enjoyed, as their exclusive prerogative, the exposition of Scripture, but now found themselves dethroned by the religious freedom Jesus had proclaimed, and He had even spoken of them as a hindrance of true knowledge. The spirit of His teaching compromised the whole state of things in the religious world. He proclaimed a new future: the vested rights of the day clung to the past, with which their interests and their passions were identified.

The new wine was thus already bursting the old bottles, and the result could not be doubtful. Conservatism felt itself imperilled, for it had been weighed, and found wanting. The priesthood had become a dividing wall between God and Israel. The religious decay of the nation found in it its expression. The sacrifices were mere outward forms; the Temple, notwithstanding the glory with which Herod's love of magnificence and hypocritical piety had adorned it, was a symbol of exclusiveness, intolerance, and hatred of humanity at large; the high officialism of the day, a dam against every reform, every breath of fresh religious thought, and every attempt at a purer spiritual life.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GALILEE.

The opposition of the Rabbis and priests, however malignant and fixed, was as yet confined to secret plottings. With the people at large, Jesus continued even increasingly popular. It was advisable, however, to avoid any pretext for overt hostility, and hence He withdrew from Capernaum for a time, on another mission to the towns and villages on the edge of the Lake, till the storm, in a measure, blew over. To the chagrin of His enemies, the multitudes attracted to see and hear Him were larger than ever The excitement was evidently spreading through all Palestine, for numbers still continued to come from Jerusalem and Idumea on the south; from Perea and Decapolis and other parts on the east, and even from the heathen district round Tyre and Sidon on the north. There were many Jews settled in every part of the land, and the concourse was no doubt of such almost exclusively. It was even found necessary that a boat should attend Him, as He journeyed along the shore, that He might betake Himself to it when the throng grew oppressive. Miraculous cases in great number increased the excitement, many who crowded round Him finding relief by touching even His clothes, and unclean spirits falling down before Him in involuntary confession of His being the Son of God. But though His pity would not refuse to heal any who came, He still sought to avoid the offence of too great notoriety, by requiring secrecy. His gentle and unostentatious progress was in such vivid contrast to the noisy and disputatious ways of the Rabbis, that St. Matthew saw in it a fulfilment of the Messianic visions of Isaiah, for He did not strive, nor cry aloud, nor was His voice heard in the streets, and in His tender gentleness He would not break a bruised reed, or quench even the smoking flax.

The Gospels do not enable us to follow any chronological sequence in the incidents recorded by them, of these months of our Lord's ministry, but it must have been about this time, perhaps on His return to Capernaum, from this mission, that we must date one of the most

interesting of their narratives. He had scarcely reached home, after His circuit, when a deputation of "the elders of the Jews" waited on Him. They were the foremost men in the Capernaum community—the governing body of the synagogue, and, as such, the Jewish magistrates of the town. It is the habit in the East to send such embassies when any request is to be made or invitation given with circumstances of special respect, but there was a feature in this case that made it very unusual. The members of the deputation, though Jewish ecclesiastical officials, came as the representatives of a heathen, possibly of a Samaritan. Lying on the edge of his territory, Herod Antipas kept a small garrison in Capernaum, and this, at that time, was under command of a centurion, who, like many of the better heathen of the day, had been drawn towards Judaism by its favourable contrast with idolatry. He had shown his sympathy with the nation, and his generous spirit, in a way then not uncommon among the wealthy, by building a synagogue in the town—perhaps that of which the massive ruins still remain. One of his slaves had been struck with a paralytic affection, and was fast sinking; and with a tenderness that did him infinite honour in an age, when a slave, with many masters, and even in the eye of the Roman law, was treated as a mere chattel, he prayed Jesus, through the Jewish elders, to heal him. Their request was at once complied with, and Jesus forthwith set out with them to the centurion's quarters.

But the zeal of the messengers had outrun their commission, for, as Jesus approached the house, a second deputation met Him, to deprecate His being put to so much trouble, and to apologize, by an humble expression of the centurion's sense of his unworthiness of the honour of such an One coming under his roof. He, himself, appears to have followed, as if it had been too great a liberty to approach Jesus except at the distance of two mediations. "Lord," said he, "trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof. Wherefore, neither thought I myself worthy to come to Thee; but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed. For I, also, am a man set under authority (and render obedience to my superiors), and have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, Go, and he goes; to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it. If, therefore, You indicate Your pleasure only by a word, the demons who cause diseases will at once obey You and leave the sick man, for they are under Your authority as my servants are under mine.

Faith so clear, undoubting, and humble, had never before cheered the heart of Jesus, even from a Jew, and, coming as it did from the lips of a heathen, it seemed the first-fruits of a vast harvest, outside the limits of the Ancient People. He had found a welcome in Samaria when rejected in Judea; and now it was from a heathen He received this lowly homage. The clouds that had lain over the world through the past seemed to break away, and a new earth spread itself

out before His soul. The kingdom of God, rejected by Israel, would be welcomed by the despised Gentile nations. "Verily," said He, "I tell you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and lie down at the table of God in the kingdom of the Messiah, as honoured guests, with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the Jew, who prided himself on being, by birth, the child of the heavenly kingdom, and despised all others, as doomed to sit in the darkness outside the banquet hall of the Messiah, will have to change places with them!" To His hearers such language would speak with a force to be measured only by their fierce pride and intolerance. To share a grand banquet with the patriarchs in the Messianic kingdom, was a favourite mode with the Jews of picturing the blessedness that kingdom would bring. "In the future world," they made God say, in one of their Rabbinical lessons, "I shall spread for you Jews a great table, which the Gentiles will see and be ashamed." But now the rejection and despair are to be theirs! The contrast between Jesus and the Rabbis was daily becoming more marked, for now He adds to all else a grand vision of a universal religion, and of a kingdom of the Messiah, no longer national, but sending a welcome to all humanity who will submit to its laws.

"Go thy way," added He, to the centurion, "and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee." And his slave was healed in that very hour.

He had apparently left Capernaum the same day, for we find Him, the next, at a village called Nain, twenty-five miles to the south-west, on the northern slope of Little Hermon, a clump of hills at the eastern end of the great plain of Esdraelon. It was still the early and popular time of His ministry, and crowds followed Him wherever He appeared. Nain, which is now a poor and miserable hamlet, inhabited only by a few fanatical Mahometans, may then have deserved its name—the beautiful. The only antiquities about it are some tombs hewn in the hills, seen as you approach, beside the road, which winds up, to the village. The presence of the Prince of Life, with a throng of disciples and followers, might well have banished thoughts of sadness, but shadows everywhere lie side by side with the light. As He came near, another procession met Him, descending from Nain, the dismal sounds rising from it, even at a distance, telling too plainly what it was. Death had been busy under these blue summer skies, and its prey was now being borne, amidst the wail of the mourner, to its last resting-place. A colder heart than that of Jesus would have been touched, for it was a case so sad that the whole town had poured forth to show its sympathy with the broken heart that followed next the bier. It was the funeral of a young man, the only son of a widow, now left in that saddest of all positions to a Jew—to mourn alone in the desolated home in which he had died, doubtless only a very few hours before. Moved with the pity at all times an

instinct with Him, Jesus could not let the train sweep on. It was not meet that death should reap its triumph in His presence. Stepping towards the poor mother, He dried up the fountain of her tears by a soft appeal. "Weep not," said He, and then moved to the bier, careless of the defilement which would have made a Rabbi pass as far as he could from the dead. Touching it, those who bore the body at once stood still. It was, doubtless, a mere open frame, like that still used for such purposes in Palestine. "Young man," said He, "I say unto thee, Arise." It was enough. "He that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother."

It was at Shunem, now Solani, a village on the other side of the very hill on which Nain stood, that Elisha had raised the only son of the lady who had hospitably entertained him; and the luxuriant plain of Jezreel, stretching out beneath, had been the scene of the greatest events in the life of Elijah, who had raised to life the son of the widow in the Phenician village of Sarepta, on the far northern coast. No prouder sign of their greatness as prophets had lingered in the mind of the nation than such triumphs over the grave, and in no place could such associations have been more rife than in the very scene of the life of both. At the sight of the young man once more alive, the memory of Elijah and Elisha was on every lip, and cries rose on all sides that a great prophet had again risen, and that God had visited His people. Nor did the report confine itself to these upland regions. It flew far and near to Judea in the south, and even to the remote Perea.

For now, six months; it may be for more than a year, the Baptist —the one man hitherto recognized, in these days, as a prophet, had lain a prisoner in the dungeons of Machaerus—doubtless, in hourly expectation of death—a man, young in years, but wasted with his own fiery zeal, and now by the shadows of his prison-house. But Antipas had not yet determined what to do with him. Shielding him from the fury of Herodias, and yet dreading to let him go free, he still suffered him, as Felix permitted Paul long afterwards, at Cæsarea, to receive visits from his disciples, as if almost ashamed to confine one so blameless. The rumours of Christ's doings had thus, all along, reached the lofty castle where he lay, and, doubtless, were the one great subject of his thought and conversation. As a Jew, he had clung to Jewish ideas of the Messiah, expecting, apparently, a national movement which would establish a pure theocracy, under Jesus. Why had He left him to languish in prison? Why had He not used His supernatural powers to advance the kingdom of God?

To solve such questions, which could not be repressed, two of his disciples were deputed to visit Jesus, and learn from Himself whether He was, indeed, the Messiah, or whether the nation should still look for another? From first to last, more than sixty claimants of the title were to rise. John might well wonder if the past were not a dream, and Jesus only a herald like himself. He had everything to depress

him. A child of the desert, accustomed to its wild freedom, he was now caged in a dismal fortress, with no outlook except black lava-crags, and deep gorges, yawning in seemingly bottomless depths. Burning with zeal, he found himself set aside as if forgotten of God, or of no use in His kingdom. Even the people appeared to have forgotten him, for their fickle applause had begun to lessen, even before his imprisonment. His work seemed to have been without results; a momentary excitement which had already died away. He could not hope for visits from Jesus which could only have given a second prisoner to Machaerus—"the Black Castle."

The reaction from the sense of boundless liberty in the desert to the forced inaction and close walls of a prison, and from the stir and enthusiasm of the great assemblies at the fords of the Jordan, affected even the strong and firm soul of the hero, as similar influences have affected even the bravest hearts since his day. Moses and Elijah had had their times of profound despondency, and it was no wonder that a passing cloud threw its shadow even over the Baptist.

The answer of Jesus was full of calm dignity. Isaiah, the special favourite of John, had given the marks, ages before, by which the Messiah should be known, and these Jesus proceeded at once to display to the disciples sent from Machaerus. Among the crowds around Him, there were always many who had been attracted by the hope of a miraculous cure of their diseases or infirmities, and these He forthwith summoned to His presence, and healed. John would understand the significance of such an answer, and it left undisturbed the delicacy which shrank from verbal self-assertion. His acts, and, doubtless, the words that accompanied them, were left to speak for Him. It was enough that He should refer them to Isaiah, and to what they had seen. "Go your way, and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." "Tell him, moreover, that I know how he is tempted; but let him comfort himself with the thought that he who holds fast his faith in spite of all fiery trials, and does not reject the kingdom of God because of its small beginnings, and still, spiritual gentleness, so different from the worldly power and glory expected, already has the blessings it is sent to bring."

The messengers had hardly departed, when His full heart broke out into a eulogy on John, tender, lofty, and fervent. "It was no weak and wavering man," said He, "bending this way and that, like the tall Jordan reeds, that ye went out in bands to the desert banks of the Jordan to see! No soft and silken man, tricked out in splendid dress, and living on dainty fare, like the glittering courtiers at Tiberias! John was a prophet of God—aye, the last and the greatest of prophets, for he was sent as the herald to prepare the way for Me, the Messiah! I tell you, among all that have been born of women, a greater and more honoured than John the Baptist has not risen!"

Passing from this tender tribute, which He had already paid to His great forerunner, even before the authorities at Jerusalem, He proceeded, as was meet, to point out the greater privileges enjoyed by His hearers, than even by one so famous. "He was great indeed in the surpassing dignity of his office, as the herald of the Kingdom; yet one far less, but still a member of that Kingdom, which is now set up among you, is greater in the honour of his citizenship than he, for he stood outside. But he did a mighty work; he roused the land to a grand earnestness for the kingdom of the Messiah, and they who were thus stirred by him, are those now being received into it. The prophets and the Law only prophesied of my coming: John announced Me as having come. Believe Me, he was the Elias who was to appear."

To a Jewish audience, no honour could be so great as this, for Elijah was the greatest of all the prophets. "Elijah appeared," says the son of Sirach, "a prophet like fire, and his words burned like a torch. He brought down famine on Israel, and by his stormy zeal, he took it away. Through the Word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and thrice brought down fire from them. O! how wert thou magnified, O Elijah, by thy mighty deeds, and who can boast that he is thine equal! He raised the dead to life, and brought them from the under world by the word of the Highest. He cast kings to destruction, and the noble from their seats. He received power to punish, on Sinai, and judgments on Horeb. He anointed kings to revenge guilt, and prophets to be his successors. He was carried up in a flaming storm, in a chariot with horses of fire; he is appointed for the correction of times to come, to abate God's wrath before judgment be let loose, to turn the heart of the father to the sons, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. It is well for those who shall behold thee!" All the majesty of the prophetic office seemed incorporate in the Tishbite, and yet this did not seem enough to Jesus to express the dignity of John, for he was more than a prophet, and no greater had ever risen among all the sons of men.

The message from John was only the expression of the general feeling which, by its want of spiritual elevation, questioned the Messiahship of Jesus, because He had not realized the national idea of a Jewish hero king, at the head of a great revolt from Rome, destroying the heathen, and establishing the theocracy by wonders like the dividing of the Red Sea, or the thunderings of Sinai. It struck home to the heart of the Saviour, that even His herald should have no higher or worthier conception of the true nature of the kingdom of God,—that even he, so near the light,—should have caught so little of its brightness. No wonder the people, as a mass, rejected Him. How long had He taught in the towns of Galilee, and yet how disproportionately small was the number He had really won, in spite of the throngs who had pressed with eager curiosity and wonder round Him, and the respect He had excited by His teachings! His heart

was bowed with sorrow. He had come to His own, and His own did not receive Him. Infinite love and pity for them filled His soul, for He was Himself a son of Israel, and would fain have led His brethren into the New Kingdom, as the first-fruits of the nations. But they refused to let themselves be delivered from the spiritual and moral slavery under which they had long sunk. The yoke of the Romans was not their greatest misfortune. That of the dead letter, and of frozen forms and formulæ, which chilled every nobler aspiration, and shut up the heart against true repentance, and practical holiness, was a far greater calamity. Even their highest ideal—the conception of the Messiah—had become a heated fantastic dream of universal dominion, apart from religious reform. A glimpse of other fields, which promised a richer harvest, had, however, lifted His spirit to consoling thoughts, for the heathen centurion had shown the faith which was wanting in Israel. His homage had been like the wave-offering before God, of the first sheaf of the Gentile world! Heathenism might be sunk in error and sin, crime and lust, and all moral confusion might reign widely in it; there was more hope of repentance and a return to a better life, from heathen indifference or guilt, than from Jewish insane, self-righteous pride.

The crowd of despised common people and publicans, to whom Jesus had addressed His eulogy of John, received it with delight, for they had themselves been baptized by the now imprisoned prophet. There were not wanting others, however, whom it greatly offended—the Pharisees and Scribes present for no friendly purpose. With the instinct of monopoly, they condemned at once whatever had not come through the legitimate channels of authorized teaching. They had gone out to John, but with the foregone conclusion to hear, criticize, and reject him with supercilious contempt, as only fit for the vulgar. Though a priest's son, he was virtually a layman, for he had not been duly ordained. He might be good enough in his way, but he was not a Rabbi. He was almost guilty of schism, like Korah. He was not licensed by the authorities, and yet preached, as, indeed, for that matter, was the case with Jesus Himself. The bitter hostility both John and He had met, rose the more in the Saviour's mind at the sight of the Rabbis on the skirts of the crowd, and the sadness and indignation of His heart broke out in stern denunciation. "To what shall I liken the men of this generation? They are like children in the empty market-places, playing at marriages and mournings; some making music on the flute for the one; some acting like mourners for the other; but neither the cheerful piping, nor the sad beating on the breast, pleasing the companion audience. John the Baptist came upholding the traditions and customs of you Rabbis; for he fasted, and paid attention to washings, and set prayers, and enjoined these on his disciples; but you said he was too strict, and would have nothing to do with him, and that he spoke in so strange a way because he had a devil. I came eating and drinking—neither

a Nazarite like John, nor requiring fasts like him; nor avoiding the table of all but the ceremonially pure, like the Pharisees; and you say I am too fond of eating and of wine, and still worse, am a friend of the publicans and sinners you despise. But the true divine wisdom which both he and I have proclaimed is justified by those who honour and follow it, for they know its surpassing worth, though you treat it as folly! The divine wisdom of both his and my coming as we have come, is vindicated by all who humbly seek to be wise, and the folly of men is seen in their fancied wisdom."

He would fain have led all to whom He had preached in His frequent journeys, into the ways of peace. But tender though He was, He was also stern, when stolid obduracy shut its eyes on the sacred light He had brought to them. Most of His mighty works had been done, and most of His no less mighty words had been spoken, in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, the district which He had made His home. But they had led to no general penitence. With a voice of unspeakable sadness, mingled with holy wrath, He denounced such wilful perversity. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida, for if the mighty works I have done in you had been done even in Tyre and Sidon, the types of besotted heathenism, they would have repented long ago, in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, exalted to heaven by my dwelling and working in you, shalt be thrust down to Hades, at the Day of Judgment; for if the mighty works I have done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, It will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the Day of Judgment, than for thee!"

It would seem as if at this point, some communication that pleased Him had been made to Jesus. Perhaps His disciples had told Him of some success obtained among the simple crowds to whom they had preached the New Kingdom. Whatever it was, He broke forth on hearing it into thanksgiving: "I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid the things of Thy Kingdom from those who are thought, and who think themselves wise, and qualified to judge—the Rabbis, and Priests, and Pharisees—and hast revealed them to simple souls, unskilled in the wisdom of the schools. I thank Thee that what is well-pleasing to Thee has happened thus!" The New Kingdom was not to rest on the theology of the schoolmen of the day, or on official authority, or on the sanction of a corrupt Church, or on the support of privileged classes, but upon child-like faith and humble love. It was not to spread downwards, from among the powerful and influential, but to rise from among the weak and ignoble, the poor and lowly, who would receive it in love and humility. It was to spread upwards by no artificial aids, but by the attractions of its own heavenly worth alone. It was a vital condition of its nature that it should, for it can only be received in sincerity, where its unaided spiritual beauty wins the heart.

Among the "babes" were doubtless included the confessors to be won from the world at large, and not from Israel alone, for the law of growth from below upwards, is that of religious movements in all ages and countries. All reformations begin with the laity, and with the obscure. Jesus had nothing to hope but everything to fear from the privileged classes, the learned guilds, the ecclesiastical authorities, and the officials of the Church generally. It sounds startling to read of His thanking God that these all-powerful classes showed neither sympathy for the New Kingdom founded by Him, nor even the power of comprehending it, and that it was left to the simple and child-like minds of the common people, in their freedom from prejudice, to embrace it with eagerness. It was because He saw in the fact, the divine law of all moral and religious progress. New epochs in the spiritual history of the world always spring like seeds, in darkness and obscurity, and only show themselves when they have already struck root in the soil. The moral and religious life, finds an unnoticed welcome in the mass of the people, when the higher ranks of lay, and even of ecclesiastical society, are morally and spiritually effete, unfit to introduce a reform, and bound by their interests to things as they are.

The overflowing fulness of heart, which had found utterance in prayer, added a few sentences more, of undying interest and beauty. It might be feared that, if old guides were forsaken, those who took Him for their leader might find Him unequal to direct them aright. To dispel any such apprehension He draws aside the veil from some of the awful mysteries of His nature and His relation to the Eternal, in words which must have strangely comforted the simple souls who heard them first, and which still carry with them a spiritual support, intensified by their awful sublimity as the words of one, in outward seeming, a man like ourselves.

"All things concerning the New Kingdom are delivered unto me of my Father—its founding, its establishment, its spread. I am, therefore, the king and leader of the new people of God—the head of the new Theocracy, divinely commissioned to rule over it. All that I teach I have received from my Father. I speak, in all things, the mind of God, and thus you are for ever safe. No one knows fully what I am, and what measure of gifts I have received as Messiah, but the Father, who has commissioned and sent me forth—Me, His Son. Nor does any man know the Father, in His counsels for the salvation of man, as I His Son do, and those to whom I make Him known. I am the true Light, who alone can lighten men, the one true Teacher, who cannot mislead.

"Come unto me, therefore, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden with the burden of rites and traditions of men, which your teachers lay on you—you, who can find no deliverance from the misery of your souls, by all these observances, and I will give your spirits rest. Cast off their heavy yoke and take mine, and learn of me, for I am not hard and haughty like your Rabbis, but meek and lowly in heart, and

ye shall find rest for your souls. For the yoke I lay on you—the law I require you to honour—is not like that which you have hitherto borne, but brings health to the spirit, and my burden is light, for it is the Law of love."

Language like this, briefly expanded, for greater clearness, demands reverent thought. Who does not feel that such words could not fall from the lips of a sinful man, but only from those of one whose nature and life lay far above all human imperfection? Who, even of the highest, or wisest, or best, of human teachers, could invite *all*, without exception, to come to Him, with the promise that He would give them true rest for their souls? And who, in doing so, could speak of it as a thing apparent to all who heard Him, that He was meek and lowly in heart? Who would think of claiming the stately dignity of sole representative of the Unseen God, and who could speak of God as his Father, in the same way as Jesus? And who would dare to link Himself with the Eternal in a Communion so awful and an inter-revelation so absolute? He makes us feel that as we listen we are face to face with the Incarnate Divine.

CHAPTER XL.

DARKENING SHADOWS.—LIFE IN GALILEE.

THE rupture with the hierarchical party was not as yet so pronounced as to prevent a more or less friendly intercourse between Jesus and some of its members. An incident connected with one happened about this time.

A Pharisee of the name of Simon, who seems to have been in good social position, had met with Jesus in some of the Galilæan towns, and had been so attracted by Him that he invited Him to his house, to eat with him. This was a mark of high consideration from one of a party so strict, for a Pharisee was as careful as a Brahmin is, with whom he ate. Defilement was temporary loss of caste, and neutralized long-continued effort to attain a higher grade of legal purity, and it lurked, in a thousand forms, behind the simplest acts of daily life and intercourse. To invite one who was neither a Pharisee, nor a member of even the lowest grade of legal guilds, was amazing liberality in a Jewish precisian. It would seem as if the courtesy had already excited timid fear of having gone too far, when Jesus accepted the invitation,—and had given place to a cold patronizing condescension, which fancied it had conferred, rather than received, an honour by His presence.

In the earlier ages of the nation it had been the habit to sit at meals on mats, with the feet crossed beneath the body, as at present in the East—round a low table—now, only about a foot in height. But the foreign custom of reclining on cushions, long in use among the Per-

sians, Greeks, and Romans, had been introduced into Palestine apparently as early as the days of Amos, and had become general in those of Christ. Raised divans, or table couches, provided with cushions and arranged on three sides of a square, supplied a rest for guests, and on these they lay on their left arm, with their feet at ease behind them, outside. The place of honour was at the upper end of the right side, which had no one above it, while all below could easily lean back on the bosom of the person immediately behind. Hospitality among the poor was prefaced by various courtesies and attentions to the guest, more or less peculiar to the nation. To enter a house except with bare feet was much the same as our doing so without removing the hat, and, therefore, all shoes and sandals were taken off, and left at the threshold. A kiss on the cheek, from the master of the house, with the invocation "The Lord be with you," conveyed a formal welcome, and was followed, on the guest taking his place on the couch, by a servant bringing water and washing the feet, to cool and refresh them, as well as to remove the dust of the road and give ceremonial cleanness. The host himself, or one of his servants, next anointed the head and beard of the guests with fragrant oil, attention to the hair being a great point with Orientals. Before eating, water was again brought to wash the hands, as the requirements of legal purity demanded, and from the fact that the food was taken by dipping the fingers, or a piece of bread, into a common dish. "To wash the hands before a meal," says the Talmud, "is a command; to do so during eating is left matter of choice, but, to wash them after it, is a duty."

With all Jews, but especially with scrupulous formalists like the Pharisees, religious observances formed a marked feature in every entertainment, however humble, and, as these were duly prescribed by the Rabbis, we are able to picture a meal like that given to Jesus by Simon.

Houses in the East are far from enjoying the privacy we prize so highly. Even at this time, strangers pass in and out at their pleasure, to see the guests, and join in conversation with them and with the host. Among those who did so, in Simon's house, was one at whose presence in his dwelling, under any circumstances, he must have been equally astonished and disturbed. Silently gliding into the chamber, perhaps to the seat round the wall, came a woman, though women could not with propriety make their appearance at such entertainments. She was, moreover, unveiled, which, in itself, was contrary to recognized rules. In the little town every one was known, and Simon saw, at the first glance, that she was no other than one known to the community as a poor fallen woman. She was evidently in distress, but he had no eyes or heart for such a consideration. She had compromised his respectability, and his frigid self-righteousness could think only of itself. To eat with publicans or sinners was the sum of all evils to a Pharisee. It was the approach of one under moral

quarantine, whose very neighbourhood was disastrous, and yet, here she was, in his own house.

A tenderer heart than his, however, knew the deeper aspects of her case, and welcomed her approach. She had listened to the words of Jesus, perhaps to His invitation to the weary and heavy-laden to come to Him for rest, and was bowed down with penitent shame and contrition, which were the promise of a new and purer life. Lost, till now, to self-respect, an outcast for whom no one cared, she had found in Him that there was a friend of sinners, who beckoned even the most hopeless to take shelter by His side. In Him and His words hope had returned, and in His respect for her womanhood, though fallen, quickening self-respect had been once more awakened in her bosom. She might yet be saved from her degradation; might yet retrace her steps from pollution and sorrow, to a pure life and peace of mind. What could she do but seek the presence of One who had won her back from ruin? What could she do but express her lowly gratitude for the sympathy He alone had shown; the belief in the possibility of her restoration that had itself restored her!

The object of her visit was not, however, long a mystery. Kneeling down behind Jesus, she proceeded to anoint His feet with fragrant ointment, but as she was about to do so, her tears fell on them so fast that she was fain to wipe them with her long hair, which, in her distress, had escaped its fastenings. To anoint the head was the usual course, but she would not venture on such an honour, and would only make bold to anoint His feet. Unmindful of her disorder, which Simon coldly noted as an additional shame, she could think only of her benefactor. Weeping and wiping away the tears, and covering the feet with kisses, her heart gave itself vent till it was calmed enough to let her anoint them, and, meanwhile, Jesus left her to her lowly, loving will.

The Pharisee was horrified. That a Rabbi should allow such a woman, or, indeed, any woman, to approach him, was contrary to all the traditions, but it was incredibly worse in one whom the people regarded as a prophet. He would not speak aloud, but his looks showed his thoughts. "This man, if He were a prophet, would have known what kind of woman this is that touches Him, for she is a sinner."

Jesus saw what was passing in his mind, and turning to him, requested an answer to a question. "There was a certain creditor," said He, "who had two debtors. The one owed him five hundred pence, the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most?" Utterly unconscious of the bearing of these words on himself, the Pharisee readily answered that he supposed he to whom the creditor forgave most, would love him most. "Thou hast rightly judged," replied Jesus. Then like Nathan with David, He proceeded to bring the parable home to his conscience.

Turning to the weeping, penitent woman at His feet, and pointing to her, He continued, "Simon, seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet, as even courtesy demanded; but she has washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I entered, has not ceased to kiss my feet tenderly. Thou didst not anoint my head with oil; but she has anointed my feet with ointment. I say unto thee, therefore, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much, but one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." Then addressing the sobbing woman herself, He told her, "Thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith has saved thee: go in peace!"

That He should claim to forgive sins had already raised a charge of blasphemy against Him, and it did not pass unnoticed now. But the time had not yet come for open hostility, and His words, in the meanwhile, were only treasured up to be used against Him hereafter.

We are indebted to a notice in St. Luke for a glimpse of the mode of life of Jesus in these months. He seems to have spent them in successive circuits, from Capernaum as a centre, through all the towns and villages of Galilee, very much as the Rabbis were accustomed to do over the country at large. In these journeys He was attended by the Twelve, and by a group of loving women, attracted to Him by relationship, or by His having healed them of various diseases; who provided, in part, at least, for His wants, and those of His followers. That He was not absolutely poor, in the sense of suffering from want, is implied in His recognition as a Rabbi, and even as a prophet, which secured Him hospitality and welcome, as an act of supreme religious merit, wherever He went. To entertain a Rabbi was to secure the favour of God, and it was coveted as a special honour. Thus, though He had no home He could call His own, He would never want ready welcome in the homes of others wherever He went, so long as popular prejudice was not excited against Him. The cottage of Lazarus at Bethany was only one of many that opened its doors to Him, and He could even reckon on a cheerful reception so confidently, as to invite Himself to houses like that of Zaccheus, or that of him in whose upper room He instituted the Last Supper. Many disciples, or persons favourably inclined, were scattered over the land. The simplicity of Eastern life favoured such kindly relations, and hence His personal support would be freely supplied, except in desert parts, or when He was journeying through Samaria, or distant places on the frontiers of Galilee. The willing gifts of friends, thrown into a common fund, supplied so fully all that was needed in such cases, that there was always a surplus from which even to give to the poor.

The names of some of the group of women who thus attended Jesus have been handed down as a fitting tribute to their devotion, while those of the men who followed Him, with the exception of the twelve apostles, are lost. The religious enthusiasm of the age, always

seen most in the gentler sex, had already spread among all Jewish women, for the Pharisees found them their most earnest supporters. It was only natural, therefore, that Jesus should attract a similar devotion. His purity of soul, His reverend courtesy to the sex, His championship of their equal dignity with man, before God, and His demand for supreme zeal in all, in the spread of the New Kingdom, drew them after Him. But so accustomed were all classes to such attendance on their own Rabbis, that even the enemies of Jesus found no ground for censure in their ministrations.

Of these earliest mothers of the Church, five are named. Mary, or Miriam, of the town of Magdala, from whom Jesus had cast seven devils; Johanna, the wife, not the widow, of Chuoza, a high official in the palace of Herod Antipas, at Tiberias; Susanna, of whom only the name is known; Mary, the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and wife of Klopas; and Schelamith, or Salome, mother of James and John, and wife of Zebedee or Zabdai, perhaps, also, the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as Mary, the wife of Klopas, is also thought by many to have been. Of the other three, whom Jesus had cured of various diseases, a surpassing interest attaches to Mary Magdalene, from her unfounded identification with the fallen penitent who did Jesus honour in the house of the Pharisee Simon. There is nothing whatever to connect her with that narrative, for it confounds what the New Testament distinguishes by the clearest language, to think of her having led a sinful life from the fact of her having suffered from demoniacal possession. Never, perhaps, has a figment so utterly baseless obtained so wide an acceptance as that which we connect with her name. But it is hopeless to try to explode it, for the word has passed into the vocabularies of Europe as a synonym of penitent frailty.

Mary appears to have, belonged to the village of Magdala, or Migdol —the Tower—about three miles north of Tiberias, on the water's edge, at the south east corner of the plain of Gennesareth. It is now represented by the few wretched hovels which form the Mohammedan village of El-Mejdel, with a solitary thorn-bush beside it, as the last trace of the rich groves and orchards, amidst which it was, doubtless, embowered, in the days of our Lord. A high limestone rock, full of caves, overhangs it on the south-west, and beneath this, out of a deep ravine at the back of the plain, a clear stream rushes past to the sea, which it enters through a tangled thicket of thorn, and willows, and oleanders, covered in their season with clouds of varied blossoms. Who Mary was, or what, no one can tell, but legend, with a cruel injustice, has associated her name for ever with the spot now sacred to her, as the lost one reclaimed by Jesus.

The circle which thus attended Him on His journeys was peculiar, above all things, in an age of intense ritualism, by its slight care for the external observances and mortifications, which formed the sum of religion with so many. This simplicity was made the great accu-

sation against Jesus, as, in after times, the absence of sacrifices and temples led the heathen to charge Christianity with atheism. Even the initiatory rite of baptism had fallen into abeyance, and fasting, and the established rules for prayer and ceremonial purifications were so neglected, as to cause remark and animadversion. There is, indeed, great reason for the belief of some, that Jesus and His followers differed, alike in dress, demeanour, mode of life, and customs, from the teachers of the day and their followers. The simple tunic and upper garment may have had the Tallith worn by all other Jews, but we may be certain that the tassels at its corners were in contrast to the huge, ostentatious size affected by the Rabbis. Nor can we imagine that either Jesus, or the Twelve, sanctioned by their use the superstitious leathern phylacteries which others bound, with long fillets, on their left arm and their forehead, at prayers. The countless rules, then, as now, in force for the length of the straps, for the size of the leather cells to hold the prescribed texts—for their shape, manufacture, &c., and even for the exact mode of winding the straps round the arm, or tying them on the forehead—marked too strongly the cold, mechanical conceptions of prayer then prevailing, to let us imagine that our Lord or the disciples wore them. There was no such neglect of His person as many of His contemporaries thought identical with holiness, for He did not decline the anointing of His head or beard, or the washing of His feet, at each resting-place. Nor did He require ascetic restrictions at table, for we find Him permitting the use of wine, bread, and honey, and of fish, flesh, and fowl. In Peter's house He invited others to eat with Him, and He readily accepted invitations, with all the customary refinements of the kiss of salutation, and foot-washing, and anointing even with the costliest perfume. The Pharisee atoned for his occasional entertainments by fasting on Mondays and Thursdays, but Jesus exposed Himself to the charge of indulgence, because He never practised even such intermittent austerities. Expense was, however, the exception and not the rule, for He praised the Baptist for having nothing costly or effeminate in his dress, and He enjoined the strictest moderation, both in dress and living, on His disciples.

It is the great characteristic of Jesus that He elevated the common details of life to the loftiest uses, and ennobled even the familiar and simple. In His company, the evening meal, when not forgotten in the press of overwhelming labours, was an opportunity always gladly embraced for informal instruction, not only to the Twelve, but to the many strangers whom the easy manners of the East permitted to gather in the apartment. After evening devotions, the family group invited the familiar and unconstrained exchange of thought, in which Jesus so much delighted. As the Father and Head of the circle, He would, doubtless, use the form of thanks and of blessing hallowed by the custom of His nation, opening the meal by the bread and wine passed round to be tasted by each, after acknowledgment of the

bounty of God and His gifts. Then would follow a word to all, in turn: the story of the day, and each one's share in it, would be reviewed with tender blame, or praise, or counsel; and the faith, and hope, and love of all would be refreshed by their very meeting round the table. How dear these hours of quiet home life were to Jesus Himself, is seen in the tenderness with which He saw, in the group they brought around Him, His "children,"—as if they replaced in His heart the household affections of the family; and in the pain, and almost womanly fondness, with which He hesitated to pronounce His last farewell to them. To the disciples themselves, they grew to be an imperishable memory, which they were fain, in compliance with their Master's wish, to prepetuate daily, in their breaking of bread. The greatness and condescension, the loving familiarity and fond endearments of close intercourse, the peace and quiet after the strife of the day, the feeling of security under His eye and care, made these hours a recollection that grew brighter and more sacred with the lapse of years, and deepened the longing for His return, or for their departure to be with Him.

In this delightful family life there was, however, nothing like communism, for there is not a trace of the property of each being thrown into a common fund. His disciples had, indeed, left all; but they had not sold it, to help the general treasury. Some of them still retained funds of their own, and the women who accompanied them still kept their property. When Jesus paid the Temple tax for Himself, He did not think of doing so for His disciples as well. It was left to them to pay for themselves. The simple wants of each day were provided by free contributions, when not proffered by hospitality, nor did He receive even these from His disciples, though Rabbis were permitted to accept a honorarium from their scholars. "Ye have received for nothing" said He, "give for nothing." He took no gifts of money from the people, nor did He let His disciples collect alms, as the Rabbis did their scholars. The only bounty He accepted was the hospitality and shelter always ready for Him in friendly Galilee. From the generous women who followed Him, He, indeed, accepted passing support, but, in contrast to the greed of the Rabbis, He only used their liberality for the need of the moment. His little circle was never allowed to suffer want, but was always able to distribute charity, and, though He seems to have carried no money, He expressly distinguishes both Himself and His disciples from the poor.

His presence among His disciples was seldom, even for a brief interval, interrupted. He might be summoned to heal some sick person, or invited to some meal; or He might wish to be alone, for a time, in His chamber or among the hills, while He prayed, but these were only absences of a few hours. It would seem as if the kiss of salutation in such cases greeted His return. He gave the word for setting out on a journey, or for going by boat, and the disciples pro-

cured what was needed by the way, if by land, and plied the oar, if on the Lake.

He always travelled on foot, and was often thankful for a draught of water, as He toiled along the hot sides of the white hills, or for a piece of bread, procured in some village through which He passed. Sometimes He went with His disciples, sometimes before them; leaving them to their own conversation, but noting and reproving, at once, their misunderstandings, or momentary misconceptions.

When a resting-place had to be found for the night, He was wont to send on some of His disciples before, or He awaited an invitation on His arrival; His disciples sharing the proffered hospitality, or distributing themselves in other houses. The entertainment must have varied in different dwellings, from the simplicity of the prophet's chamber where the Shunamite had provided a bed, a table, a stool, and a lamp, to the friendship, and busy womanly ministrations, and homage of lowly discipleship, of homes like the cottage of Bethany. Where He was welcomed, He entered with the invocation, "Peace be to this house"—but, unlike the Pharisees—without asking any questions as to the levitical cleanness of the house, or its tables, or benches, or vessels. It was very rarely, one would suppose, that He was not gladly received, but when at any time He met inhospitality, He only went on to the next village. Sometimes He bore His rejection silently, but at others, moved at their hardness, He shook the very dust of the town from His feet on leaving it, as a protest. When meekness could be shown He showed it, but where the circumstances demanded, He was as stern as commonly He was gentle.

It is not easy to realize the daily life of one so different from ourselves as Jesus, but a fine poetical mind has imagined the scene of the healing of Mary Magdalene, and the appearance and acts of Christ so finely, that I borrow some passages from his pen.

The landing-place at Capernaum was at the south side of the town. Thither the boats came that brought over wood from the forests of Gaulonitis, and thither the boat steered that bore Jesus, His four earliest disciples acting as boatmen. He had been on the other side of the Lake, and had returned now, in the evening. The sun was just setting, but a few beams seemed to have lingered to die away on His face, and the full moon rose, as if to see Him from behind the brown hills still bathed in purple. The soft evening wind had risen to cool His brow, and the waters, sparkling in the moonlight, rose and fell round the boat, and gently rocked it. As it touched the shore there were few people about, but a boat from Magdala lay near, with a sick person in it, whom it had taken her mother's utmost strength to hold, and keep from uttering loud cries of distress. She had been brought in the hope of finding Jesus, that He might cure her.

"Master," said John, "there is work yonder for you already." "I must always be doing the work of Him that sent me," replied Jesus; "the night cometh when no man can work." The mother of the

sick woman had recognized Him at the first glance, for no one could mistake Him, and forthwith cried out with a heart-rending voice, "O Jesus, our helper and teacher, Thou messenger of the All-Merciful, help my poor child,—for the Holy One, blessed be His name, has heard my prayer that we should find Thee, and Thou us." Peter forthwith, with the help of the other two, who had let their oars rest idly on the water, turned the boat, so that it lay alongside the one from Magdala. Jesus now rose; the mother sank on her knees; but the sick woman tried with all her might to break away, and to throw herself into the water, on the far side of the boat. The boatman, however, and John, who had sprung over, held her by the arms, while her mother buried her face in the long plaited hair of her child. Her tears had ceased to flow; she was lost in silent prayer. "Where are these people from?" asked Jesus of the boatman, and added, to His disciples, when He heard that she came from Magdala, "Woe to this Magdala, for it will become a ruin for its wickedness! The rich gifts it sends to Jerusalem will not help it, for, as the prophet says, 'They are bought with the wages of uncleanness, and to that they will again return.'" "Turn her face to me that I may see her," added He. It was not easy to do this, for the sick one held her face, bent over, as far as possible, towards the water. John managed it, however, by kind words. "Mary," said he, for he had asked her mother her name, "do you wish to be for ever under the power of demons? See, the conqueror of demons is before thee, look on Him, that you may be healed. We are all praying for you, as Moses, peace be to him, once prayed for his sister,—'O God, heal her.' Do not put our prayer to shame; now is the moment when you can make yourself and your mother happy." These words told; and no longer opposing strength to strength, she let them raise her head, and turn her face to Jesus. But when she saw Him, her whole body was so violently convulsed, that the boat swayed to and fro, and she shrieked out the most piercing wails, which sounded far over the Lake.

Jesus, however, fixed His eyes on hers, and kept them from turning away, and as He gazed, His look seemed to enter her soul, and break the sevenfold chain in which it lay bound. The poor raving creature now became quiet and did not need to be held; her convulsions ceased, the contortions of her features, and the wildness of her eyes, passed off, and profuse sweat burst from her brow, and mingled with her tears. Her mother stepped back, and the healed one sank down on the spot where her mother had been praying, and muttered, with subdued trembling words, to Jesus,—"O Lord, I am a great sinner; is the door of repentance still open for me?" "Be comforted, my daughter," answered He, "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; thou hast been a habitation of evil spirits, become now a temple of the living God." The mother, unable to restrain herself, broke out—"Thanks to Thee, Thou Consolation of Israel," but He went on,—"Return now, quickly, to Magdala, and be calm, and give

thanks to God in silence." John stepped back into the boat to Jesus, and the other boat shot out into the Lake, on the way home. The two women sat on the middle seat. Mary held her mother in her arms in grateful thanks, and neither spoke, but both kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, till the shore, jutting out westwards, hid Him from their sight.

When the boat with the women was gone, Peter bound his to the post to which the other had been tied, but Jesus sat still in deep thought, without looking round, and the disciples remained motionless beside Him, for reverence forbade them to ask Him to go ashore. Meanwhile, the people of Capernaum, men, women, and children, streamed down in bands; some soldiers of the Roman-Herodian garrison, and some strange faces from Perea, Decapolis, and Syria, among them.

The open space had filled, and now Peter ventured to whisper, in a low voice which concealed his impatience, "Marānu wē Rabbinu—Our Lord and Master—the people have assembled and wait for Thee." On this Jesus rose. Peter made a bridge from the boat to the shore with a plank, hastening across to make it secure, and to open the way; for the crowd was very dense at the edge of the water. Christ now left the boat, followed by the three other disciples, and, when He had stepped ashore, said to Peter,—"Schim'ōn Kêfâ"—for thus He addressed him when He had need of his faithful and zealous service in the things of the kingdom of God—"I shall take my stand under the palm-tree yonder." It was hard, however, to make way through the crowd, for those who had set themselves nearest the water were mostly sick people, to whom the others, from compassion, had given the front place. Indeed, Jesus had scarcely landed, before cries for help rose, in different dialects, and in every form of appeal. "Rabbi, Rabboni," "Holy One of the Most High!" "Son of David!" "Son of God!" mingled one with the other. Jesus, however, waving them back with His hand, said, "Let me pass! to-night is not to be for the healing of your bodily troubles, but that you may hear the word of life, for the good of your souls." On hearing this they pressed towards Him, that they might at least touch Him. When, at last, with the help of His disciples, He made His way to the palm, He motioned to the people to sit down on the grass. The knoll from which the palm rose was only a slight one, but when the crowd had sat down in rows, it sufficed to raise Him sufficiently above them. The men sat on the ground, leaving any better spots for the women and children.

It is a mistake to think of Jesus standing while He taught. He stood in the synagogue at Nazareth while the Prophets were being read, but He sat down to teach. He sat as He taught in the Temple, and when He addressed the multitude whom He had miraculously fed; and when He spoke from Simon Peter's boat, He did so sitting.

Under the palm lay a large stone, on which many had sat before,

to enjoy the view over the Lake, or the shade of the branches above. The Rabbis often chose such open air spots for their addresses. There was nothing extraordinary, therefore, when Jesus sat down on it, and made it His pulpit. His dress was clean and carefully chosen, but simple. On His head, held in its place by a cord, He wore a white sudar, the ends of which hung down His shoulders. Over His tunic, which reached to the hands and feet, was a blue Tallith, with the prescribed tassels at the four corners, but only as large as Moses required. It was so thrown over Him, and so held together, that the grey red-striped under-garment was little seen, and His feet, which had sandals, not shoes, were only noticed occasionally, when He moved. When He had sat down and looked over the people, they became stiller and stiller, till nothing was heard but the soft plash of the ripple on the beach.

As He sat on the stone, Simon and Andrew, the sons of Jonas, stood on His right and left hand, with James and John, the sons of Zabdai. The people stood around the slope, for as yet Rabbis were heard, standing. "Sickness came into the world," says the Talmud, "when Rabban Gamaliel died, and it became the rule to hear the Law sitting." "Sons of Israel, Men of Galilee," He began, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come: repent, and believe the Gospel. Moses, your teacher, peace be to him, has said—'A prophet willt he Lord your God raise unto you from your brethren, like unto me. Him shall ye hear. But he who will not hear this prophet shall die!' Amen, I say unto you: He who believes on me has everlasting life. No man knows the Father but the Son, and no man knows the Son but the Father, and he to whom the Son reveals Him." Then, with a louder voice, He continued, "Come to me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Then, drawing to a close, He added, "Take on you the yoke of the kingdom of heaven, for the kingdom of heaven is the fulfilling of the Law and the Prophets. Give up that which is worth little, that you may have what is of great price. Become wise changers who value holy money above all other, and the pearl of price above all. He that has ears to hear, let him hear."

CHAPTER XLI.

THE BURSTING OF THE STORM.

THE summer passed in a succession of excitements and an unbroken recurrence of exhausting toil. Wherever Jesus appeared He was surrounded by crowds, anxious to see and to hear. The sick everywhere pressed in His way, and friends brought the bed-ridden and helpless to Him, from all quarters. From early morning till night, day by day, without respite, there was a strain on mind, heart, and body, alike. Even the retirement of the house in which He might be resting, could not save Him from intruding crowds, and time or free space for meals was hardly to be had. Such tension of His whole nature must have told on Him, and must have affected His whole nervous and physical system. To be continually surrounded by misery, in every form, is itself distressing; but, in addition to this, to be kept on the strain by the higher spiritual excitement of a great religious crisis, and to be overtaxed in mere physical demands, could not fail to show results, in careworn features, feverishness of the brain, and the need of temporary quiet and rest. Yet sympathy was felt for Him only by a few. The thoughtless crowds did not realize that they were consuming in the fires of its own devotion the nature they intended to honour, and His enemies, seeing everything only through the disturbing light of their hatred, invented a theory for it all that was sinister enough.

The continued and increasing support Jesus received from the people, was a daily growing evil in the eyes of the ecclesiastical authorities. They were in danger of losing their authority, which they identified with the interests of orthodoxy, and national favour with God. They had let Him choose four or five disciples, without feeling alarmed, for a movement as yet so insignificant was almost beneath their notice. The choice of a publican as one of this handful had, indeed, apparently neutralized any possible danger, by the shock it gave to public feeling. The further choice of the Twelve was, however, more serious. It seemed like consolidation, and progress towards open schism. There were, already, parties in Judaism, but there were no sects, for all were alike fanatically loyal to the Law, the Temple, and the Scribes, and ready to unite against any one who was not as much so as themselves, in their own sense. Criticism was utterly proscribed: blind worship of things as they were was imperatively required, and, hence, Jesus, with His free examination of received opinions, provoked the bitterest hostility. As long, however, as He had no following He was little dreaded, but signs of organization and permanence, such as the choice of the Twelve, and the growing enthusiasm of the people towards Him, determined the authorities on vigorous action. Information

was laid against Him at Jerusalem, where He had already been challenged, and Rabbis were sent down to investigate the whole question.

Every movement which did not rise in the Rabbinical schools was suspected by the Rabbis and their disciples, and there were circumstances in that of Jesus, which were especially formidable. The superhuman powers He displayed could not be questioned, and the Rabbis could boast of nothing as imposing. They were falling into the shade. Respect was growing for Jesus among the people, in spite of them. His claims were daily urged more frankly, and the masses were disposed to assent to them. On His return to Capernaum He had cured a man who was blind, dumb, and mad, and possessed besides with a devil; and so astounding a miracle had raised the question, far and wide, whether, in spite of their former ideas, He were not the Son of David—the Messiah, after all. Men had, indeed, expected an outward political kingdom, with a blaze of miracle wrought on behalf of the nation at large, but they began to ask each other, "When the Christ cometh will He do more miracles than this man has done?" It could not be endured. The movement of John had just been crushed, and, now, in restless Galilee, one far more dangerous to the Jerusalem authorities was rapidly taking shape and consistence. It must be put down at any cost.

The Rabbis from the capital, reverend and grey, did not know whether to be more bitter at the discredit thrown on their own claims to supernatural powers, or at the popular favour shown to Jesus. He cast out devils, indeed, but so did they, and their disciples, the exorcists. It was enough for Him, however, to speak, and the sufferer was cured of all ailments alike, while they used adjurations, spells, and magic formulæ which were dangerously like the superstitions of the despised heathens. They laid stress on their knowledge of the secret names of God and the angels. To utter the cipher which stood for these, was, in their belief, to set in motion the divine and angelic powers themselves, and a whole science of the black art had been invented, defining how and for what ends they could be pressed into the service of their invoker, like the genii of the Arabian Nights into that of a magician.

The calm dignity and simplicity of Jesus, contrasted with their doubtful rites, was, indeed, humiliating to them. The mightiest of all agencies at their command was the unutterable name of "Jehovah"—called in the Book of Enoch, in the jargon of the Rabbinical exorcists—the oath Akâl and "the number of Kesbeel." By this number, or oath, it was held, all that is has its being. It had also a secret magical power. It was made known to men by the wicked angels—"the sons of God"—who allied themselves with women, and brought on the flood. "It was revealed by the Head of the Oath to the holy ones who dwell above in majesty; and his name is Beqa. And he said to the holy Michael that he should reveal to them that secret name, that they might see it, and that they might use it for an

oath, that they who reveal to the sons of men all that is hidden, may shrink away before that name and that oath. And this is the power of that oath, and these are its secret works, and these things were established by the swearing of it. The heaven was hung up for ever and ever (by it), before the world was created. By it the earth was founded above the water, and the fair streams come by it for the use of the living, from the hidden places of the hills, from the foundation of the earth, for ever. And by that oath was the sea made, and underneath it He spread the sand, to restrain it in the time of its rage, and it dare not overstep this bound from the creation of the world to eternity. And through that oath the abysses are confirmed, and stand, and move not from their place, from eternity to eternity. And through that oath the sun and the moon fulfil their course, and turn not aside from the path assigned them, for ever and ever. And through that oath the stars fulfil their course, and He calls their names, and they answer, from eternity to eternity. And even so the spirits of the waters, of the winds, of all airs, and their ways, according to all the combinations of the spirits. And by that oath are the treasuries of the voice of the thunder and of the brightness of the lightning maintained, and the treasuries of the rain, and of the hoar frost, and of the clouds, and of the rain, and of the dew. And over them all this oath is mighty."

Possessing spells so mighty as they believed the secret names of the higher powers thus to be, the Rabbis had created a vast science of magic, as fantastic as that of mediæval superstition, to bring these awful powers to bear on the mysteries of the future, and the diseases and troubles of the present. Combinations of numbers of lines, or of letters based on them, were believed to put them at the service of the seer, or the exorcist. Resistless talismans, protecting amulets, frightful curses, by which miracles could be wrought, the sick healed, and demons put to flight, were formed in this way. Armed with a mystic text from the opening of Genesis, or the visions of Ezekiel, or the secret name of God, or of some of the angels, or with secret mysterious unions of letters, the Rabbis who dealt in the dark arts had the power to draw the moon from heaven, or to open the abysses of the earth! The uninitiated saw only unmeaning signs in their most awful formulæ, but he who could reckon their mystic value aright was master of angelic or even divine attributes.

The appearance of Jesus as a miracle-worker so different from themselves, must have excited the Rabbinical schools greatly. They made no little gain from their exorcisms, and now they were in danger of being wholly discredited. At a loss what to do, they determined to slander what they could not deny, and attribute the miracles of Jesus to a league with the devil. They had, indeed, for some time back been whispering this insinuation about, to poison the minds of the people against Him, as an emissary of Satan, and thus, necessarily, a disguised enemy of Israel, and of man. It would raise superstitious

terror, if they could brand Him as a mere instrument of the kingdom of darkness.

The cure of a man, blind, dumb, and possessed, was so astounding, that the Rabbis ventured to spread their malignant slanders more widely than heretofore. Jesus had retired to Peter's house, wearied and faint, after the miracle, but the multitude were so greatly excited that they crowded into the room, so that He could not even eat, and among them the Jerusalem Scribes, who were so bitter against Him, took care to find themselves. He read their faces, and knew their words. "This fellow, unauthorized and uneducated as He is, casts out devils, under Beelzebub, as their prince." They believed that the world of evil spirits, like that of the angels, formed a great army, in various divisions, each with its head and subordinates, its rank and file; the whole under the command of Satan. Beelzebub—the "fifth god,"—was the name given by Jewish wit and contempt to Beelzebul, —"the lord of the (royal) habitation"—a god of the Phenicians. To him was assigned the control of that division which inflicted disease of all kinds on man, and Jesus, they hinted, was playing a part under him, in pretending to drive out devils from the sick, that He might win the people to listen to His pestiferous teaching. They would not admit that His power was divine, and the ideas of the times necessarily assumed that it must be the opposite. It was of no avail that light streamed in on them; for bigotry, like the pupil of the eye, contracts in proportion to the outward brightness. He was, with them, an emissary and champion of the kingdom of the devil, and an enemy of God.

They even went farther. Not only was He in league with the devil; He Himself was possessed with an unclean spirit, and the demon in Him had turned His brain: "He had a devil, and was mad." They had spread this far and wide, and yet, ventured, now, into His presence.

Jesus at once challenged them for their slanders, and brought them, in the presence of the multitude, to an account. "His whole life was before the world. The aim and spirit of it were transparent. Was it not expressly to fight against the evil and confused spirit of the day; to overthrow all wickedness and all evil; to restore moral and spiritual soundness in the people; did He not strive after all this, with the fulness of His power? Who could deny that He only sought good, and spent all His energy to advance it? And could He league Himself with the prince of darkness to do good? What a ridiculous, self-contradictory charge! To think of Him overcoming evil by evil; fighting against the kingdom of darkness, with the weapons of darkness, was almost too foolish to repeat! No kingdom is in conflict with itself, or if there be division in it, it is already in process of dissolution, for it needs nothing more to bring it quickly to ruin." There was no answering such an argument. But Jesus had still more to say.

"If I," said He, "cast out devils by the power of Beelzebub, by whom do your disciples cast them out? You do not attribute their works to the prince of devils, why do you do so with mine? But if I do these things by the power of God, I prove myself to be sent from Him, and to be His Messiah, and where the Messiah is, there also is His Kingdom. Do you still hesitate to draw this conclusion? Ask yourselves, then, how I can invade the kingdom of Satan, and take from him his servants, instruments, and victims, the sick, and the possessed, without having first overcome himself? The strong man's palace can only be spoiled when he, himself, is first bound. It is no light matter to put yourselves in the position you take towards me. He who is not with me, is, as may be seen in your case, my enemy. No neutrality between the Messiah and the devil is possible. If you do not help, with me, to gather in the harvest, you scatter it, and hinder its being gathered!"

The arguments of Jesus were so irresistible that the Rabbis, taken in the snares they had set for Him, could say nothing, and, now, while they were silenced before the people they had striven to pervert, He advanced from defence to attack. They claimed to be the righteous of the land, but had no idea of what true righteousness meant. Jesus had come to offer forgiveness to sinners, not to judge them. He desired rather to deliver them from their guilt. But He saw that His enemies, the theologians and clergy of the day, and the privileged classes generally, had determined to reject Him, whatever proofs of His divine mission He might advance. Their prejudices and self-interest had blinded them till their religious faculty was destroyed. They had deliberately refused to be convinced, and conscience grows dead if its convictions are slighted. The heart gets incapable of seeing the truth against which it has closed itself. They dared to speak of the Holy Spirit of God who inspired the New Kingdom, and in whose fulness Jesus wrestled against selfishness and ambition, soothed the woes of the people, opened a pure and heavenly future, and sought to win men to eternal life, as a spirit of evil. Light was to them darkness, and darkness light. They even sought to quench the light in its source by plotting against His life. This, He told them, was blasphemy against the Divine Spirit. They had wilfully rejected the clear revelation of His presence and power, and had shown deliberate and conscious enmity against Him. "This awful sin," said He, "cannot be forgiven, because, when it occurs, the religious faculty has been voluntarily destroyed, and wilful, declared opposition to heavenly truth has possessed the soul as with a devil." "To speak against me as a man," He continued, "and not recognize me as the Messiah, is not a hopeless sin, for better knowledge, a change of heart, and faith, may come, and I may be acknowledged. But it is different when the truth itself is blasphemed; when the Holy Spirit, by whom alone the heart can be changed, is contemned as evil. The soul has then shut out the light, and has chosen darkness as its portion.

"I warn you to beware of speaking thus any longer. Either decide that the tree is good and its fruit consequently good, or that it is bad and its fruit bad, but do not act so foolishly as you have done in your judgment on me, by calling the tree bad—that is, calling me a tool of the devil, and yet ascribing good fruit to me—such, I mean, as the casting out devils. Do not think what you say is mere words, for words rise from the heart, as if from the root of the man: as the tree and the stem, such is the fruit. See that you do your duty by yourselves, that the tree of your own spiritual being be good and bear good fruit. The tree is known by its fruits. It is no wonder you blaspheme as you have done; a generation of vipers, your hearts are evil, and you are morally incapable of acknowledging the truth, for the lips speak as the heart feels. Witness to the truth flows from the lips of the good; such language as yours, from the lips of the evil. But, beware, for I tell you that, as such words are the utterance of the heart, and show how you are affected towards God and His Spirit, you will have to give account of them when I come as the Messiah, to judgment. Your words respecting me and my Kingdom will then justify or condemn you."

At this point, as was common in the most solemn Jewish assemblies, He was interrupted by some of the Rabbis present. They demanded in strange contradiction to the theory that He was a secret agent of Beelzebub, some astounding miracle, as a sign from heaven in support of His claims as the Messiah: as hereafter they did, in every part of the world, from the Apostles. The masses, and even their leaders, expected the repetition of all the great deeds of Moses and Joshua, to inaugurate the coming of the Messiah, and other claimants did not venture to resist the demand. Under the Procurator Fadus, a certain Theudas drew out the people to the Jordan to see Israel walk through, once more, on dry ground. Under Felix, a prophet promised to throw down the walls of Jerusalem, as Joshua did those of Jericho, and gathered thirty thousand men on the Mount of Olives to see them fall. Others invited the nation to follow them into the wilderness, where they promised to show them stupendous signs of the kingdom of God having come. It might have seemed a temptation to One possessing supernatural power, to silence all cavil by a miracle of irresistible grandeur. But outward acknowledgment of His claims was of no worth in a kingdom like that of Christ's, resting on love, and homage to holiness. He cared nothing for popularity or fame, and lived in unbroken self-restraint, using His mighty power only to further spiritual ends. It was easy, therefore, to repel the seduction, which He had already overcome in His first great wilderness struggle. "An evil and adulterous generation," said He —"unfaithful to God, who chose Israel for His bride –asks for a sign, grand beyond all I have given, that I am the Messiah." Then, predicting His violent death, He went on—"There shall be no sign given it, but that of the prophet Jonah. For, as he was three days

and three nights in the belly of the fish, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the kingdom of the dead." The spiritual miracle of His life and words were the only signs He could vouchsafe while He lived, for at no time did He lay stress on miracles alone as a means of gaining disciples, but subordinated them to His proclamation of the Truth. His preaching would itself be a sign like that of the preaching of Jonah to the Ninevites. "The men of that city," said He, "would rise in the judgment day, to witness against this generation, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and *He* was greater than that prophet. The Queen of the South, who came from Sheba to hear the wisdom of Solomon, would then condemn them, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth, and great as they thought the glory of Solomon, they had one greater than he before them, in Himself. Vast multitudes had gone out to hear John, and had professed repentance; vast multitudes had followed Himself, and, yet, the result had been only temporary and superficial. It would prove with this generation as with a man from whom an unclean spirit has for a time gone out. Meeting no suiting rest elsewhere, it returns, and finding its former dwelling in the man's soul ready for it, it allies itself with seven demons still worse than itself, and with their help enters the man once more. The Reformation under John, and under Himself, was only temporary; the nation would fall back again to its old sinful ways, and become worse than ever." He foresaw His rejection, and thus foretold it.

He had silenced the Rabbis, and no doubt by doing so had intensified their hatred, but a new trial awaited Him. The insinuation that His brain was affected had reached His family, who still lived at Nazareth. The effects of the exhausting toil, and constant excitement of these months, had, apparently, led even His friends to fear that He would give way under such tension, and, now, the hints of the Rabbis that He was possessed, and spoke and acted as He did, under demoniacal influence, raised the fear that judicial action would be begun against Him, on the part of the Jerusalem authorities. Very possibly the simple household at Nazareth, who, like other Jews, must have looked on the Rabbis with superstitious reverence, and have shrunk from questioning anything they said, had innocently accepted the insinuation, that He was really out of His mind, as a result of being possessed. Prejudiced in favour of the common idea of the Messiah as a national hero, at the head of Jewish armies, they had not risen to any higher conception, and felt impelled by every motive to interfere, and, if possible, put a stop to what seemed to them an unaccountable course of action on His part. It was only about ten hours' distance from Nazareth to Capernaum, over the hills; they would go and see for themselves; and so, Mary, and the brothers and sisters of Jesus—the whole household, for Joseph was dead—set out for Peter's house.

They arrived while the crowd, excited by the miracle they had

just seen, and half believing that Jesus must be the expected Messiah, still filled the house and thronged the courtyard, so that the Rabbis, overawed, could do nothing against Him. Anxious to withdraw Him from His dangerous course, and unable as yet to understand Him, they had come to the conclusion, perhaps at the instigation of the Rabbis, that the best plan would be to lay hold on Him, and take Him home by force, as one beside Himself. If they could keep Him for a time at Nazareth; if necessary, under restraint; the quiet, they hoped, would calm His mind and free Him from His hallucinations. It is wonderful that they could argue with themselves in such a way —especially that Mary could have fancied it madness that He acted as He did and called Himself the Messiah; but vision, in spiritual things as in nature, depends, not on the flood of light around us, but on the eye on which it falls.

On coming near, however, they found they could not make their way through the crowd, and had to request those near to let Him know their presence, and that they wished to speak with Him. At any moment when busy with the work of the Kingdom, all lower relations, bonds, and cares, of His earlier life, ceased to engage Him, but much more was it so at a time like this, when engrossed with its supreme interests, and with the victory over its enemies which He had hardly as yet completed. The most sacred of earthly ties lost its greatness before the grandeur of spiritual kinship in the new deathless communion He was founding. "Who is my mother?" asked He, "and who are my brethren?" Then, stretching His hands towards those around Him—"Behold," said He, "my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father in Heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." It was the same answer, in effect, as He had, perhaps before this, given, when a woman in the crowd, unable to restrain herself, had expressed aloud her sense of the surpassing honour of her who had borne and nursed Him. "Yea," replied He, "rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God and keep it."

It was from no want of tenderness Jesus thus spoke. A holy duty to Himself, His honour, and His calling, demanded His acting as He did. It was imperative that He should keep Himself from the hands even of His nearest friends, to prevent their unconsciously carrying out the plans of His enemies, by violently restraining Him. He had, moreover, founded a new family of which He was the Spiritual Head, and this, henceforth, as it spread among men, was to be His supreme earthly relationship. The ready faith of the Samaritans, and the surpassing example of the heathen centurion, had foreshadowed the extension of the New Kingdom, beyond Israel, to all nations. To do the will of mere men, whether priests, or Rabbis, was no longer the condition of heavenly favour. Henceforth, over the earth, to do the will of God was the one condition required to open the gates of the way of life.

Foiled in their attempt to brand Jesus publicly as in league with the devil, the Pharisees resolved to try the subtler plan of pretending friendliness, and inviting Him to partake of their hospitality, that they might watch what He said, and, if possible, provoke Him to commit Himself in some way that would bring Him within the reach of the Law. It was yet early, and one of them asked Him, with this treacherous object, to join the light morning meal, then lately introduced into Palestine by the Romans. He accepted the invitation, with a full knowledge of the spirit in which it had been given. It had been expected, perhaps, that the honour of entertainment in a circle of Rabbis, would awe a layman of humble standing like Jesus, but He took care to show His true bearing towards them from the moment He reclined at table. Washing the hands before eating was, in all cases, a vital requirement of Pharisaic duty. A Rabbi would rather have suffered death than eat before he had done so. "It is better," said Rabbi Akiba, "in a time of persecution, to die of thirst than to break the commandment, and thus die eternally," and proceeded to wash his hands before touching food, with the allowance of drinking water brought him by his jailor. But observance of Pharisaic rules required much more. Christ had just come from among a crowd, and had, besides, cast out a devil, and, thus doubly defiled, ought to have purified Himself by a bath, before coming to table with those who were Levitically clean. A Pharisee always bathed himself before eating, on coming from the market-place, to wash away the defilement of contact with the unclean multitude, and it was to have been expected that Jesus would have been equally scrupulous. He had committed Himself, however, to uncompromising opposition to a system which substituted forms for true spiritual religion, and took His place on the couch without any ceremonial purification. The host and his guests were astonished, and betrayed, at least in their looks, their real feelings towards Him; bitter enough before, but now fiercer than ever, at this defiant affront to their cherished usages.

Roused by their uncourteous hostility, He instantly took His position of calm independence and superiority, for He feared no human face, nor any combination of human violence. Knowing perfectly that He was alone against the world, He felt that the Truth required Him to witness for it, come what might to Himself.

"I see," said He, "what you are thinking. You Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and the platter, but you fill both, within, with the gains of hypocritical robbery and wickedness; you cleanse the outside of a cup, and think nothing of your own souls being full of all evil. Fools! did not He who made the outside of a cup make the inside as well? As He made all outward and visible things, has He not also made all inward and spiritual? How absurd to take so much care of the one, and to neglect the other! Let me tell you how you may attain true purification. Give with willing, loving hearts, what

you have in your cups and platters, as alms, and this will make all your ceremonial washings of the outside superfluous, and cleanse both the vessels and your hearts. The Rabbis have told you that 'charity is worth all other virtues together,' but your covetousness is a proverb, for you devour widows' houses, and have invented excuses for a son robbing even his father for your good. But woe to you, Pharisees! for it is vain to expect this of you, who know nothing of true love. You lay stress on external trifles, and neglect the principles and duties of the inner life—you tithe petty garden herbs, like mint, and rue, and all kinds besides, and are indifferent to right and wrong, and to the love of God. If you wish to tithe the garden herbs, it is well to do so, but you should be as zealous for what is much more important. Your vanity is as great as your grasping hypocrisy! Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the chief seats in the synagogues, and to be flattered by men rising up as you pass in the crowded market-place, and greeting you with reverend salutations of Rabbi, Rabbi, your reverence, your reverence. Woe unto you! you are like graves sunk in the earth, over which men walk, thinking the ground clean, and are defiled when they least suspect it. Men think themselves with saints if in your company, but to be near you is to be near pollution!"

A Rabbi among the guests here interrupted Him. "Teacher," said he, "you are condemning not only the common lay Pharisees, but us, the Rabbis." The interruption only directed Jesus against the "lawyers" specially. "Woe to you, lawyers, also!" said He, "for ye burden men with burdens grievous to be borne, while ye, yourselves, touch not these burdens with one of your fingers to help the shoulders to bear them. Ye sit in your chambers and schools, and create legal rules, endless, harassing, intolerable, for the people, but not affecting yourselves,—shut out as you are from busy life. Woe unto you! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, but your fathers, in whose acts you glory, killed them. Shame for their having done so might make you wish those sacred tombs forgotten; but you have no shame, and rebuild these tombs to win favour with the people, while in your hearts you are ready to repeat to the prophets of to-day the deeds of your fathers towards those of old! Your pretended reverence for these martyrs, shown in restoring their sepulchres, while you are ready to repeat the wickedness of their murderers, makes these tombs a witness against you. The Holy Spirit had this in view, when He said by Me, sometime since, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will persecute and kill; that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation—from the blood of Abel to that of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the Temple.' Yes, I say unto you, it will be required of this generation. Under the guidance of you lawyers it was, that the people treated them as they did! Woe to you! you have taken away from the nation the key to

the temple of heavenly knowledge—have made them incapable of recognizing the truth,—by your teaching. You, yourselves, have not entered, and you have hindered those from entering who were on the point of doing so!"

The die was finally cast. Henceforth Jesus stood consciously alone, the rejected of the leaders of His nation. There was before Him only a weary path of persecution, and, at its end, the Cross. An incident, recorded by St. Luke, seems to belong to this period. The multitudes thronging to hear the new teaching were daily greater, in spite of the hostility of the Rabbis, for their calumnies and insinuations had not yet abated the general excitement. "An innumerable multitude" waited for the reappearance of Jesus, and hung on His lips to catch every word. He might be attacked and slandered in the house of the Pharisee, but, as yet, the crowd looked on Him with astonishment and respect. Opinions differed only as to the scope of His action: that He was a great Rabbi, was felt by all.

It was the custom to refer questions of all kinds to the Rabbis for their counsel and decision, which carried great weight, though it might be informal and extra-judicial. Their words were virtually law, for to dispute or oppose them was well-nigh criminal. To get the support of one so great as Jesus, therefore, in any matter, would, as it seemed, decide a point at once in his favour whom He supported.

One of the crowd, reasoning thus, chose an opportunity to solicit His weighty interference in a question of inheritance, in which there was a strife with a brother. "Teacher," said he, "speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." But he had utterly misconceived Christ's spirit and sphere. In the briefest and most direct words, the idea that He had anything to do with "judging" or "dividing" in worldly affairs was repudiated. It was not His province.

The question, however, gave an occasion for solemn warning against the unworthy greed and selfishness which lie at the root of all such strife, on one side or the other. Addressing the crowd, who had heard the request, He gave them a caution against all forms of covetousness, or excessive desire of worldly possessions, in the following parable.

"Watch," said He, "and keep yourselves from all covetousness. For, though a man may abound in riches, his life does not depend on his wealth, but on the will of God, who can lengthen or shorten his existence, and make it happy or sad, at His pleasure. Let me show you what I mean.

"The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully. And he reasoned within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, because I have no room to stow away my crops?' And he said, 'This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater, and I will gather together into them all my crops and my property, and will say to

my soul, Soul, thou hast much property laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'

"But God said unto him, 'Fool, this night thy soul is required of thee, and whose will those things be which thou hast prepared?'"

"So," added Jesus, "is he who heaps up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God. Death, coming unexpectedly, and, at latest, soon strips him of all, if he has only thought of himself and of this world. The true wisdom is to use what we have so as to lay up treasures, by its right employment, in heaven, that God may give us these, after death, in the kingdom of the Messiah."

CHAPTER XLII.

AFTER THE STORM.

The meal in the house of the Pharisee was a turning point in the life of Jesus. The fierceness of His enemies had broken out into open rage, so that, as He left, He was followed by the infuriated Rabbis, gesticulating, as they pressed round Him, and provoking Him to commit Himself by words of which they might lay hold. A vast crowd had meanwhile gathered, partly on His side, partly turned against Him by the arts of His accusers. The excitement had reached its highest.

With such a multitude before Him, it was certain that He would not let the opportunity pass of proclaiming afresh the New Kingdom of God. It had been called a kingdom of the devil, and it was meet that He should turn aside the calumny. His past mode of teaching did not, however, seem suited for the new circumstances. It had left but small permanent results; and a new and still simpler style of instruction, specially adapted to their dulness and untrained minds and hearts, would at least arrest their attention more surely, and force them to a measure of reflection. Pressing through the vast throng, to the shore of the Lake, He entered a fishing-boat, and, sitting down at its prow, the highest part of it, began, from this convenient pulpit, as it lightly rocked on the waters, the first of those wondrous parables, in which He henceforth so frequently embodied His teachings.

The Parable or Mashal was a mode of instruction already familiar to Israel since the days of the Judges, and was in familiar and constant use among the Rabbis. Its characteristic is the presentation of moral and religious truth in a more vivid form than is possible by mere precept, or abstract statement, use being made for this end of some incident drawn from life or nature, by which the lesson sought to be given is pictured to the eye, and thus imprinted on the memory, and made more emphatic. Analogies hitherto unsuspected between familiar natural facts and spiritual phenomena; lessons of duty

enforced by some simple imaginary narrative or incident; striking parallels and comparisons, which made the homeliest trifles symbols of the highest truths, abound in all the discourses of Jesus, but are still more frequent from this time. Nothing was henceforth left unused. The light, the darkness, the houses around, the games of childhood, the sightless wayside beggar, the foxes of the hills, the leathern bottles hung up from every rafter, the patched or new garment, and even the noisy hen amidst her chickens, served, in turn, to illustrate some lofty truth. The sower on the hill-side at hand, the flaming weeds among the corn, the common mustard plant, the leaven in the woman's dough, the treasure disclosed by the passing ploughshare, the pearl brought by the travelling merchant from distant lands for sale at Bethsaida or Tiberias,—at Philip's court or that of Antipas,—the draw-net seen daily on the Lake, the pitiless servant, the labourers in the vineyards around—any detail of every-day life—was elevated, as occasion demanded, to be the vehicle of the sublimest lessons. Others have uttered parables; but Jesus so far transcends them, that He may justly be called the creator of this mode of instruction.

The first of the wondrous series was, fitly, that of the Sower, for the planting of the New Kingdom must needs be the first stage towards further truths respecting it. In a country like Galilee no illustration could be more easily intelligible, and it is no wonder that Jesus often uses it. As He sat in the boat, with the multitude standing on the shore, each feature of the parable would be before Him,—the sower going out from the neighbouring town or village to sow his patch on the unenclosed hill-side, with its varied soil: here warm and deep; there a mere skin over the limestone rock; invaded at some spots by thorns, then, as now, so plentiful in Palestine, and crossed by the bridle path, along which men and beasts were passing constantly. The seed was good, and the sower faithfully did his work, but it depended on the soil itself, what would be the result, for the rain, and the light, and the heat, came equally on all. Part fell on the trodden path,—which, itself, though now beaten hard, was once as soft and yielding as any part of the field,—and was crushed under foot, or picked up by the birds hovering near. Some fell on spots in which the springing thistles had already taken root, and were about to shoot up in rank vigour; some on the shallow skin of earth over the rock, where the hot sun hastened the growth, while the hard rock hindered the root from striking down; and only a part fell on good soil, and yielded a return for the sower's toil.

This parable, apparently so self-illustrative, only troubled the minds of the Twelve, and of the wider circle in His hearers who had any interest in His words. The mode of teaching was new to them from Jesus, and the conceptions embodied in what they had heard were directly opposite to all they had been accustomed, as Jews, to associate with the Messianic kingdom. The careless multitude,

drawn together only by curiosity, had scattered when Jesus had finished His address, and He had returned to Peter's house. Thither, however, a number of graver spirits followed, with the Twelve, to seek the explanation they felt assured would be vouchsafed. It was, indeed, precisely what Jesus desired, for it afforded an opportunity for the fuller instruction of all whose state of heart fitted them to receive it, and it drew them into closer personal intercourse with Him. He received them with frank delight. "Unto you, who thus show your interest in the mysteries of the kingdom of God," said He, "it is given to know them, but to the indifferent outside multitude, they are designedly left veiled in parable." To understand spiritual truth, the heart must be in sympathy with it; otherwise, to try to explain it, would be as idle as to speak of colours to the blind, or of music to the deaf. When the religious faculty was dead or dormant, religious truth was necessarily incomprehensible and undesired. "He came to be a Light to men, and to reveal the truth, not to hide it, but men must have willing ears, and take heed to what they hear, pondering over it in their hearts. To listen only with the outward ear, like the careless multitude, is to draw down the punishment of God. In natures thus wilfully indifferent, hardness only grows the worse the more they hear. To such, the very word of life becomes a word of death. Rejecting me, the Light, they are given up by God to the darkness they have chosen, and lose, erelong, even the superficial interest in higher things they may have had."

"Ye, on the other hand," He continued, "who really have received the truth into a willing heart, have thereby proved your fitness for higher disclosures, and shall have them. The honest interest you show determines the measure of knowledge you are able to receive, and it will be given you. He who has opened his soul to Me will receive continually richer insight into the truth. Alas for those who shut their eyes and stop their ears! But blessed are your eyes, into which you have let the truth enter, and blessed are your ears, into which you have let it sink. Amen! I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see those things which ye see, and did not see them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and did not hear them."

Such, in brief explanatory paraphrase, was the welcome to those really anxious to understand the parable, which Jesus forthwith expounded to them, disclosing, as He did so, conceptions and principles which required a complete revolution in their minds to understand and appropriate. He announced that the ancient kingdom of God was, henceforth, spiritualized, so that the only relation of man to it, from this time, was a moral one; not, as heretofore, in part, a political. So entirely, indeed, was this the case, that He did not even speak of the external agencies or organization by which men should be outwardly received as its citizens, but assumed that acceptance depended on the man himself; on his will and his sympathy with what the

New Kingdom offered. "The Word is the only Seed of the Gospel. As the embodiment of all truth, it is by following it that the Will of God is realized by men, and the one grand law of the kingdom thus obeyed. It is given to men, as the seed to the ground, and they can hear and understand it if they choose, but all depends on their doing so. As the strewn seed neither springs nor bears fruit on much of the ground, and fails except where it sinks into good soil, so the relations of men to the Word of God are very various. Few, it may be, receive it aright, but it is always the fault of men themselves if it be not living seed in their hearts. Worldly indifference may have made the soil impenetrable as the trodden path, or have left only a skin of sentiment over hidden callousness; or worldly cares or pleasures may be let spring up, and choke the better growth; in all cases it is the man, not the seed, or the sower, on whom the result turns. Before all things, this is to be felt, so that no one may imagine that entrance into the New Kingdom depends on any but moral conditions. Every merely outward claim to citizenship must be laid aside; it is a matter strictly between God and the soul. The more completely this is done, the greater the fitness for entrance. He must be willing simply to receive, without a thought of merit, or right, what God is pleased to give, of His free bounty. The New Kingdom is, in truth, altogether spiritual. It works directly on the soul, by spiritual truth. It advances in the individual and the world, not by outward power, or political glory, or by miracles, but by the Word sown in the heart, and its aim, like its nature, is spiritual; to make the heart and life visibly fruitful in all heavenly grace."

As the parable of the Sower described the planting of the New Kingdom in the heart, others set forth the secret invisible energy of the Word, by the indestructible vigour of which the New Kingdom unfolds itself in the individual and in the world. It was compared to the silent and mysterious growth of seed, which springs up by unperceived development, first into the blade, then into the ear, and, finally, into the ripened corn. The triumphant future found an analogy in the growth of a grain of mustard-seed—which, though among the smallest, grows to be the greatest amongst herbs, shooting out wide branches, and becoming a tree, in the shade of which the birds of the air come and lodge. It found another in the silent leavening of three measures of meal by a spot of yeast, hidden in them. As surely as the seed will spring, or the mustard-seed become a tree, or the yeast spread through all the three measures of meal,—as certainly as the spark spreads to a flame,—the New Kingdom will grow and expand to world-wide glory. It needs no battles to be won, as the hearers fancied it did; no violent revolutions. Jesus knew that the living force of truth in each single heart must spread, and that, as soul after soul was won, it would silently revolutionize the world, and leaven all humanity.

That there should be hindrances was only natural, and these He shad-

owed out in the parable of the Tares secretly sown by an enemy in a man's field, and undistinguishable from the grain till both had come to fruit. For the sake of the wheat both were left, by the householder, till the harvest, but, in the end, the tares would be gathered for burning, and the wheat for the barn. The full meaning of this parable was given afterwards by Jesus Himself. The visible Church would include in it, till the last day, many who were not true members. To separate them is not the part of man, but of the Judge. But this is, and could be, meant only in a general sense, for the whole spirit of the Gospels implies the rejection of the openly unworthy, and their reception again on their repentance. "Those who to-day are thorns," says Augustine, "may be wheat to-morrow."

"So," said He, also, "my kingdom may be likened to a net cast into the lake; which gathers in it good fish and bad, and, when full, is drawn to shore, and the good gathered into vessels while the bad are cast away."

The supreme worth of citizenship in His kingdom He set forth in separate parables. It was like a treasure hidden in a field, which, when found, so filled the heart of the discoverer, that, for joy, he went away, and sold all he had, and bought the field, that the treasure might be his. Or, it was like a priceless pearl met with by a merchant seeking such a treasure, and secured by him at the cost of all he had. The kingdom might be found by some without their seeking it, as the treasure by the peasant in the field; or it might be met by one in earnest search for it, like him who found the costly pearl. In either case, it could only be obtained by joyful self-sacrifice of all things else for its sake, and by the realization of the worthlessness of all human possessions in comparison with it.

It is not certain that all these parables were spoken the same day, though there is nothing improbable in the supposition that Jesus should have given such a free utterance to the wealth of imagery and illustration which flowed from His lips with no mental effort. But the evening came at last, and found Him wearied out with the work and agitations of such an eventful day. Capernaum could, however, no longer be the quiet home for Him which it had been. The fierce rage of the priests and schoolmen in the morning, and their intrigue with the household of Nazareth to lay hold on Him as a madman, possessed with a devil, showed that they would stop at no wickedness to get Him into their power. The controversy respecting Him had penetrated every humble cottage, and quiet work was no longer possible. Moreover, it was necessary to introduce His disciples to a wider sphere of life and work than Capernaum and the little districts round it, in preparation for their independent action, and to form and strengthen their character and power of self-reliance by putting it to the proof, and revealing to them the weaknesses yet to be overcome.

The wall of lonely hills on the east side of the Lake, seamed by deep gorges through which the path led to the vast upland plains of

the eastern Jordan—a region little known to the busy population of Galilee, and in bad reputation with most, as more heathen than Jewish—offered Him a secure retreat. Instead of returning to Peter's house, where new troubles might have awaited Him, He ordered His disciples to carry Him to the opposite shore, that He might escape from all painful scenes, and enjoy peace and rest for a time. His enemies would not be likely to seek a Rabbi like Him in such an unclean district; least of all, in the neighbourhood He first visited—that of the heathen city, Gadara.

But the incidents of the day were not yet over. The streets on the way to the boat were full with the evening gossips, glad to talk with their neighbours in the gathering twilight, now their day's work was done; and, with others lingering about, in the hope of seeing the great Rabbi. A number of these soon gathered round Christ and His disciples as they made towards the shore, and at last the silence was broken by one of them, strange to say, himself a Rabbi, offering to follow Him as His scholar. "Teacher," said he, "I will follow Thee wherever you go." It might have seemed a great thing for one in the position of Jesus to have a Rabbi among His disciples, but He never courted human aid, or acted on mere expediency. The highest, no less than the humblest, could only be received on the condition of absolute self-sacrifice and sincerity. Nor did He readily accept those who offered themselves, but chose rather to summon such as He wished, to His immediate circle. "Ye have not chosen me," said He, on a future occasion, "but I have chosen you." He returned, therefore, only an answer which should test the applicant's motives to the uttermost. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Virtually driven from the one dwelling at Capernaum He could regard as His home, and rejected from Nazareth, He was, henceforth, a wanderer, with no fixed dwelling. From this time He was almost a fugitive from His enemies, never remaining long in any one place,—a homeless and houseless man.

To a second applicant, who professed himself willing to follow Him as soon as he had discharged the pious duty of burying his father, the startling answer was returned, "Let the (spiritually) dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Under other circumstances Christ would have commended such filial love; but it was necessary now, to show, by a supreme example, that those who sought to follow Him must deny natural feelings, otherwise entirely sacred, when the interests of the kingdom of God required it. He had in mind, doubtless, the thirty days' mourning that were virtually implied, and knew the results of indecision in a matter so paramount. It was, moreover, a requirement of the Rabbis, in similar cases, that if any one who wished to be a scholar of the Law, had to choose between burying even his nearest relation—his parent, or his brother, or sister—and devoting himself at once to his sacred duties, he should

leave the burial to others, as the less important duty, and give himself up on the moment, undividedly to the other. The words of Jesus were the familiar and well-known expression of this recognized condition of even Rabbinical discipleship. The applicant would have had to act thus had he chosen to follow a Rabbi, and less devotion and sincerity could not be demanded in the service of the New Kingdom.

A third, who asked leave before finally following Christ, to go home and bid his family circle farewell, received a similar answer—"No one having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God; he who gives himself up to the kingdom of God, must do so with an undivided heart, suffering no earthly cares to distract him."

He had set out for the Lake side as soon as the multitudes had scattered sufficiently to open the way; and now, having reached it, He went into a fishing-boat, just as He was, and they pushed off in company with some other boats. It was already late for Orientals to be abroad, and the rest in the open air, after such continuous mental and bodily excitement, soon brought the sweet relief of deep refreshing sleep. We never hear of Jesus being ill; and, indeed, such a life as His, utterly free from all disturbing causes which might induce disease, may well have been exceptionally healthy. The coarse leather boss of the steersman's seat, at the end of the boat, sufficed for a pillow, and presently He forgot in deep slumber the cares and labours of the day.

The sail across, however, though usually so refreshing and delightful, was destined to be rudely disturbed. The Lake lies in its deep bed among the hills, ordinarily, smooth as a mirror, but sudden storms at times rush down every wady on the north-east and east, and lash the waters into furious roughness. The winds sweeping over the vast bare table-land of Gaulonitis and the Hauran, and the boundless desert beyond, pour down the deep ravines and gorges, cut in the course of ages by streams and torrents, on their way to the Lake, and lash it into incredible commotion. Its position, about six hundred feet below the Mediterranean, induces such sudden hurricanes, by heating the air over it till the colder atmosphere of the hills rushes down to fill the vacuum caused by the rarefaction.

Such a storm now burst on the calm bosom of the waters, and presently raised the waves to such a height, that the unprotected boat was all but swamped. In the wild roaring of the wind; amidst blinding torrents of rain, and the thick darkness of the hurricane cloud, which blotted out the stars; and the dashing of the sea, which broke over them each moment; even bronzed sailors like the Twelve lost their presence of mind, and were filled with dismay. Driven before the wind, they were fast filling, and, as it seemed, must presently go down. Through all the wild tumult of wind, darkness, rain, and sea, however, Jesus lay peacefully asleep, so profoundly had He been exhausted. It seemed as if He were indifferent to their fate. In their

natural reverence they long hesitated to rouse Him, but at last did so, and appealed to Him to save them. Amidst the terror around, He was entirely self-possessed. Rising, He gently rebuked the fear that had so unnerved them, and then, with an awful sublimity, rebuked the wind as if it had been a living power, and bade the angry sea be still; and both wind and sea at once obeyed Him. A great calm spread over the Lake. "Why are ye fearful," said He, "O ye of little faith?" They had seen Him control disease, cast out devils, and even raise the dead; could they not have felt assured that neither winds nor waves could harm them when He was there? "What manner of man is this?" muttered the awe-struck apostles, "for He commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey Him!"

The boat had been driven to the southern end of the Lake, and Christ consequently landed in the territory of the city of Gadara, a half-heathen town on the table-land, twelve hundred feet above the shore, and at some distance from it. It was then in its glory, and lay round the top of the hill, looking far over the country. Long avenues of marble pillars lined its streets: fine buildings of squared stones abounded. Two great amphitheatres of black basalt adorned the west and north sides, and there was a third theatre near its splendid public baths. It was the proud home of a great trading community, to whom life was bright and warm when Jesus landed that morning, on the shore beneath, and looked up towards its walls.

The hill on which Gadara stands is of soft limestone, full, like the limestone of Palestine generally, of larger and smaller caves, many of which had been enlarged by the poorer classes and turned into dwelling-places, for which they are used even yet, while others had been converted into tombs, with massy stone doors. The roadside is still strewn with a number of sarcophagi of basalt, sculptured with low reliefs of genii, garlands, wreaths of flowers, and human faces, in good preservation, though long emptied of their dead.

Madness in every form has, in all ages, been treated by the rude therapeutics of the East as a supernatural visitation, with which it is unsafe to interfere more than is needed, and, hence, even at this day, furious and dangerous maniacs may, from time to time, be seen in the towns of Palestine, in some cases, absolutely naked. Others, equally furious, often betake themselves to the mountains, and sleep in tombs and caves. In their paroxysms they become terribly dangerous, for the mental excitement gives them prodigious strength, and, hence, one is sometimes a terror to a whole neighbourhood.

Two such madmen, it seems, had taken up their abode in the caves and tombs, by the side of the road from the Lake to Gadara, and had made it almost impassable, from their fierceness. Jesus had hardly set His foot on shore before they sallied out towards Him, shrieking amidst the wild howls of their frenzy, as they approached; in deprecation of His interference with them. From some reason, now unknown, St. Mark and St. Luke speak only of one of these two

sufferers, and as their account is the fuller, it is better to keep to it. Both were more than merely insane; they were possessed with devils, and conscious that they were so. As in similar cases, the demoniac presence controlled the human will, and spoke in its own name. Both had already shown their terror at the coming of one whom they recognized as the Son of God, and adjured Him not to torment them before the time. But now the one of whom especially St. Mark and St. Luke speak, ran and fell down before Jesus, in the manner of Eastern reverence. He had been a terror to the whole country side, for he would wear no clothes, but roamed the hills naked, and would live only in the tombs. Efforts had been made to put him in restraint, but neither ropes, nor the chains used, had sufficed to hold him. Night and day he wandered the mountains, driven hither and thither by the mysterious possession that had him in its power, filling the air with his howls and shrieks, and cutting himself with sharp stones in his frenzy. But a greater than the strong man by whom he was enslaved was now here. Though dreading His presence, the demon could not keep away from it. It may be that, in the confused human consciousness, there was yet a glimmer of reason and moral health which drove him to the Saviour, but, if so, the spirit took the word from him, and spoke in his stead. "What is thy name?" said Jesus to the demon,—and the mysterious answer was, "Legion, for we are many." Forthwith came the command to come out of the man. But, true to diabolical instinct, the spirits would fain injure, even in leaving. On the slopes of the hill, a great herd of swine, the unclean and hateful abomination of the Jew, were feeding. They were, doubtless, owned by some of the heathen citizens of Gadara, for swine were in great demand as sacrifices and food among the foreign population. "Send us into the swine," cried the devils, "and do not drive us into the abyss," and the request was granted, to the destruction of the whole herd, which ran violently down the slope into the Lake and were drowned. Jesus, as Son of God, was free to act at His will with all things, for they were all His by the supreme right of creation, and this right is continually used in the moral government of the world. There is no ground for a moment's discussion respecting an act of One to whom all things were committed, as Head of the New Kingdom, by the Father.

It is idle, in our utter ignorance of the spirit world, to raise difficulties, as some have done, at this incident. It is recorded in three of the four Gospels, and cannot be explained away except by doing violence to the concurrent language of the three evangelists. However mysterious, it is no more so than many facts in the life of Jesus, and must be taken simply as it stands.

The terror of the Apostles in the storm had shown how little Jesus could rely on them in the far worse trials of future years, but the mighty power He had shown in stilling the tumult of the elements, had been a lesson of confidence in Him, which they could hardly

forget. It was a further step in their training to trust in Him, when they now saw Him perform the still more wonderful miracle of stilling the inward tempest of a human soul. In neither case could they say a word. They stood silent and ashamed. They were far, as yet, from having grown to the spiritual manhood of their great office.

The new teaching of Jesus had excited, for a time, a wide popularity that had even besieged His dwelling and thronged His person. The people had given Him their unhesitating confidence. But His collisions with the priests and Rabbis, and His disturbed relations to His family—with the whisperings of calumny on all sides—had chilled the enthusiasm of many. Distrust and suspicion had been sown in hitherto trustful minds, and these reports had penetrated even to the east of the Jordan. Their first open results were seen at Gadara, for it was here He first met with open want of sympathy with His person and work. The incident of the destruction of the swine, infuriating the owners, was enough, with what they had before heard, to turn the people against Him. The insinuation that He cast out devils by a league with their chief, filled weak minds with terror. He had hardly landed, and was in sore need of rest, but was at once forced to leave. For the first time, the disciples had an example of that invincible unbelief they were, hereafter, to meet so often. But, if Jesus were hindered from preaching in Decapolis, He had the satisfaction of leaving behind Him the former maniac, now clothed and in his right mind, to spread the fact of his deliverance. The poor man would fain have followed his Benefactor, but Jesus had other work for him. Contrary to His rule hitherto, He dismissed him, with directions to go home to his friends, and tell them the great things the Lord had done for him, and how He had had compassion on him. His preaching, however simple, was a seed of future good in these regions.

Forced to return to Capernaum, Jesus had scarcely landed, when a demand was made on His sympathy which He could not resist. One of the rulers, or chief men of the Synagogue, a local dignitary, named Jairus, had an only daughter, a rising girl of about twelve, at the point of death. After all that had passed between Jesus and the Rabbis in the town, it must have been a great effort for one in the position, and with the inevitable prejudices of Jairus, to seek His aid; but distress humbles pride, and often quickens faith. Pressing towards Him, and regardless of a crowd around, he fell at His feet, as inferiors then did, and still do, in the East, before those greatly above them, and besought Him to come and lay His hand on his child, and restore her to health. A heart that sympathized with all sorrow could not resist such an appeal, and, forthwith, He set out, through the throng that attended all His appearances, to the ruler's house. Before arriving there, however, a message came that the sufferer was dead, and that there was no need of further trouble. They little knew who was on His way to them.

"Be not afraid," said He to the ruler, "only believe." The crowd of relatives and friends that always throng the chamber of death in Palestine, had already begun the pitiful wails and cries of Eastern lamentations, and the dirge-flutes had already begun to add their sad burden to the tumult. Jesus had likely been delayed before starting, and, as preparations for burial commence as soon as breath leaves the body, the corpse had likely been washed, and laid out in the customary way for the grave, before He came.

The noise and confusion were not in keeping with the work Jesus intended. "Why make ye this ado and weep?" said He, as He entered, "The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." He used the word, doubtless, just as He afterwards did in the case of Lazarus, but they mocked at His pretended knowledge, which seemed to impute error to themselves, for they knew that she was dead. He was the Prince of Peace, and would have no such disturbing excitement, and therefore caused the crowd to leave the chamber of death. Only the father and the mother of the girl, and the three disciples, Peter, James, and John, were allowed to see His triumph over the King of Terrors. Taking the damsel by the hand, and using words of the language of His people,—Talitha cumi—Damsel, I say unto thee, arise—the spirit returned to the pale form, and she rose and walked. But in Capernaum, at a time when His enemies were so keenly afoot, cautious obscurity was needed, and He therefore enjoined silence as to the miracle.

On the way a touching incident had happened. A woman, troubled for many years with an internal ailment, after "having suffered many things of many physicians, and having spent her all," in the vain hope of cure, resolved to seek help from Jesus. It is no wonder that she had given up the faculty of the day, for their practice was in keeping with the scientific ignorance of the times. Lightfoot quotes from the Talmud the Jewish medical treatment of such a complaint. It was as follows: "Take of the gum of Alexandria the weight of a zuzee (a fractional silver coin); of alum the same; of crocus the same. Let them be bruised together, and given in wine to the woman that has an issue of blood. If this does not benefit, take of Persian onions three logs (pints); boil them in wine and give her to drink, and say, 'Arise from thy flux.' If this does not cure her, set her in a place where two ways meet, and let her hold a cup of wine in her right hand, and let some one come behind and frighten her, and say, 'Arise from thy flux.' But if that do no good, take a handful of cummin (a kind of fennel), a handful of crocus, and a handful of fenegreek (another kind of fennel). Let these be boiled in wine, and give them her to drink, and say, 'Arise from thy flux.'" If these do no good, other doses, over ten in number, are prescribed; among them, this—"Let them dig seven ditches, in which let them burn some cuttings of vines, not yet four years old. Let her take in her hand a cup of wine,

and let them lead her away from this ditch, and make her sit down over that. And let them remove her from that, and make her sit down over another, saying to her at each remove,—'Arise from thy flux.'"

But these were only a few of the more harmless prescriptions in vogue. The condition of medical science in the East may be judged from its character at the centre of civilization and progress in the West. Pliny's Natural History gives us some curious glimpses of this. Ashes of burnt wolf's skull, stags' horns, the heads of mice, the eyes of crabs, owls' brains, the livers of frogs, vipers' fat, grasshoppers, bats, &c., supplied the alkalis which were prescribed. Physicians were wont to order doses of the gall of wild swine, of horses' foam, of woman's milk; the laying a piece of serpent's skin on an affected part, mixtures of the urine of cows that had not been sucked, the fat of bears, the juice of boiled bucks' horns, and other similar abominations. For colic, they prescribed the dung of swine or hares, for dysentery powdered horses' teeth, for affections of the bladder, the urine of wild swine, or asses' kidneys, or plasters of mice-dung. It was a great assistance in child-birth if the mother, or any of her circle, ate wolf's flesh. Cold in the head was cured by kissing a mule's nose. Sore throat was removed by embrocations of snails' slime, and the inhalation of the fumes of snails slowly burnt. Quinsy was cured with the brain of the marsh owl; diseases of the lungs, with mouse-flesh, disorders of the stomach with boiled snails, of which, however, only an odd number must be taken; weakness of the bowels, with powdered bats; miscarriages were prevented by carrying about with one a living amphisbæna, a small snake which was believed to be able to go either backwards or forwards; frogs' eyes were useful for contusions, if the eyes were taken out at the conjunction of the moon, and kept in an egg-shell. Frogs boiled in vinegar were sovereign for toothache; for cough, the slime of frogs which had been hung up by the feet; for rupture, sea hedgehogs—the echinus—dissolved in asses' milk; for diseases of the glands, scorpions boiled in wine; for ague or intermittent fever, the stone from the head of sea-eels, but it must be taken out at the full moon.

The poor woman who now determined to seek help from Jesus had endured all the tortures of such medical treatment for twelve years, and, of course, was hurt rather than healed. She could not, however, venture to speak to Jesus; perhaps womanly shame to tell her disease in public kept her back; perhaps reverence for one so mysteriously above other men. Besides, she was unclean, and had to stand aloof from society. Joining the crowd following Him to the house of Jairus, she could only dare to touch the zizith, or tassel, that hung on the corner of His outer garment, as on those of all other Jews. The touch at once healed her, but it did not pass unnoticed. To have let it pass, might have seemed to give coun-

tenance to a superstitious fancy that His clothes had virtue in themselves. Turning round, He at once asked who touched Him. She could no longer hide her act, and, alarmed lest her boldness should be punished by the renewal of the trouble she now felt to have been healed, fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. It was enough. "Daughter," said He, "thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace, and be whole of thy plague."

CHAPTER XLIII.

DARK AND BRIGHT.

Among the crowd that had gathered round the house of Jairus, the supernatural powers of Jesus found renewed exercise. No sooner had He reappeared than two blind men followed Him to Peter's house, appealing to Him as the long-expected Messiah—"Have mercy upon us, Son of David." It was an invariable condition of His granting His miraculous aid that those who sought it should come with sincere and trustful hearts, for to such only could any higher good be gained by mere outward relief. The poor men eagerly assured Him that they believed He could do what they asked, and with a touch of His hand their eyes were opened. "According to your faith," said He, "be it unto you." The prudent charge not to speak of their restored sight, so necessary after all that had lately passed, was heard only to be forgotten, for, in their joy, they could not refrain from publishing it wherever they went. Another miracle of these days is recorded—the casting out a devil from one who was dumb, so that the sufferer, henceforth, spoke freely. The multitudes were greatly moved by such repeated demonstrations of transcendent power, which seemed to surpass all that had ever been seen in Israel, but this popularity only the more embittered His enemies. Repeating their old blasphemy, they could only mutter, "He casts out devils by being in league with their prince." That He should thus recognize classes whom they represented as accursed, and from whom they withdrew themselves as unclean, seemed a reflection on their teaching and conduct. The blind, the leper, the poor, and the childless, were alike accounted stricken of God, and "dead," by the hard Judaism of the day, and yet He associated freely with all who sought Him. Either He or they must be vitally wrong.

It was now late in the year, and the Twelve had not yet gone out on any independent mission. He had taken them with Him on His circuits round Capernaum, to train them for wider fields. They had seen Him scattering the first seed, and caring for it in its growth, preserving what had been won; strengthening the weak, and calling the careless to repentance. On a narrow theatre they had had a

widely varied experience. More lately they had had examples of unbelief in the Gadarenes, of weak faith in themselves, and of strong in the woman who had touched Jesus, and even in the two blind men. Another lesson, however, was needed—that of fierce opposition, which they were destined to meet so often hereafter.

Jesus had never visited Nazareth since His leaving it, and His heart, doubtless, yearned to proclaim the New Kingdom to the population among whom He had lived so long. The visit of Mary, and of His sisters and brothers, to Capernaum, to take Him away with them, however mistaken, had, doubtless, been prompted by the tenderest motives. Simple country people, they had heard from their holy Rabbis that He whom they so loved had overstrained His mind and body till His reason had failed, and that there was ground to fear that the Evil One had secretly taken advantage of His enthusiasm to work miracles by His hands. What could it be, indeed, but serving the Prince of Darkness, to slight the sacred traditions by acts like mixing with the common people without bathing afterwards, or breaking the Sabbath by healing on it, or by letting the disciples pluck corn and rub it in their hands on the holy day, or letting a leper come near Him, or eating with unclean publicans and sinners? He was a revolutionist: He was turning the world upside down: He was questioning the wisdom and authority of the Rabbis, and who but the devil or his emissary could do that?

It was a grave matter, however, to revisit Nazareth. If His nearest relatives had given way to such fears respecting Him, what could He expect from the multitude, who had known Him only in His humble obscurity? He must seem to them, at the least, a dangerous disturber of the religion of the land; a fanatic who was stirring up confusion in Israel. But, where duty called, He never knew fear. In company with His disciples He set out from Capernaum, taking the road along the hills by the Lake, to Magdala, turning westward from it, through the valley of doves, by Arbela, with its high cliffs and robber caves, and the Horns of Hattin, past Tabor, south-westerly to Nazareth. It was only a journey of seven hours, and could easily be made in a day. He stayed in Nazareth several days, no doubt in His mother's house.

The sword had already begun to pierce the Virgin's heart. Tender, humble, patient, and loving, she had trials we cannot realize. Knowing that her Son was the Messiah, her faith was sorely perplexed by His past course, for her ideas were those of her nation, and His were wholly the opposite. Her intimate knowledge of the sacred oracles of His people had shown itself in the *Magnificat:* her simple trust in God, her happy thankfulness of soul, her musing thoughtfulness, her modest humility, her strength of mind and energy of purpose, had all been seen in earlier days, and, no doubt, as she grew older, the light of a higher world was reflected with ever-increasing glory from her soul. But she was, and must have been, in sore trouble at the

position of her Son. His first interview with her has been conceived thus:—

"Refreshment over, and thanks returned with covered head by Jesus, we may fancy how Mary followed Him to His own chamber. When, at last, she thus had Him alone, she fell on His neck, but instead of kissing Him, as she had done a thousand times, secretly, in spirit, she hid her face on His shoulder, and a stream of tears fell from her eyes. She wept without speaking, and would not let Him go.

"At last, Jesus said, 'Mother, be calm, and sit down by me, and tell me why you weep?' She did so, and began,—her hand in His, and His eyes fixed on hers—'I rejoice that at last I have you again, and grieve that we shall soon have once more to part.' 'Do you know, then,' asked Jesus, 'how soon or how late I shall leave this world?' 'Oh, my child,' replied Miriam, 'does not the deathly whiteness of your face tell me that you are wearing yourself out? and if you do not wear yourself out, though I am a woman, shut in by the four corners of my house, how can I help seeing that the hatred of your enemies increases daily, and that they have long sworn your death?' 'Granted,' broke in Jesus, 'but has not a great part of the people banded round me, and does not this stand in the way of the plots against me?' 'Indeed,' replied Miriam, 'the might of your preaching, your independence towards those in power at Jerusalem, the novelty of your whole appearance, and, above all, your miracles, have won many to your side, but the favour of the people is like a rain-torrent, which swells quickly, only to pass away as soon.' 'You are right, O blessed among women,' answered Jesus; 'most of this people seek not salvation from sin, but from quite other burdens, and when the decisive moment comes, they will forsake me, faint-heartedly and ungratefully. Your look into the future does not deceive you, but even the enmity and evil of men serve the counsels of God, which I came to fulfil. My way goes downwards to deep darkness, from which my soul shrinks, but I follow the will of my Father, whether the road be up or down.' As He spoke, His countenance, which had been clouded for a moment, was, as it were, transfigured, as the divine in His nature shone through the human; and Miriam, drinking in all these beams, thrilled with a more than mortal joy. There was a long pause. Miriam was silent, but she was, as always, wrapt in prayer. 'Fair,' said she, in the thoughts of her soul, 'is the rising sun, fair the green vine, fair the blue sea, but fairer than all is He. What an hour is this! My eyes have beheld the King in His beauty.'" The picture is beautiful, but it ascribes feelings to Mary which sprang only later.

It had been the instinctive practice of Jesus, from early childhood, to attend all the synagogue services, and He was still suffered to do so, in spite of the opposition He had excited. When Sabbath came, therefore, He went to morning worship, and, after the reading of the

Thorah, stood up in silent offer to read the Haphtara of the day from the Prophets. He was forthwith called to the reading-desk, when the Sheliach Tsibbur, or Hazan, handed Him the roll. The lesson for the day could not have been more appropriate, for it contained the passage of Isaiah which spoke of the Messiah—"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind: to set at liberty the oppressed: to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Then, sitting down, He began His Midrasch, or explanation, commenting on the passage in language which astonished the hearers, and applying the predictions of the prophets to Himself.

But the honest wonder and delight at His words soon gave way to less friendly feeling. Whispers soon ran through the congregation respecting Him. How came He by such wisdom? He belonged to no school: claimed no place in the succession of Rabbis: spoke on His own authority, without ordination or sanction from the doctors. Is not this the carpenter, the son of Miriam and Joseph, the brother of James and Joses, and of Juda and Simon? and are not His sisters here, with us? They could not realize One with whom, and with whose circle, they had been on familiar relations of citizenship, as a prophet. Perhaps His freedom towards the traditions had offended the strict notions of some of His brothers, and the petty jealousy of a country village could not acknowledge a superior in one whom they had long treated as an equal, or even an inferior. His humble origin, His position as a carpenter, a trade He had learned among them, the absence of anything special in His family, and the fact that even they did not acknowledge His claims, were all remembered. Perhaps jealousy of Capernaum mingled with other thoughts, for He had done miracles there, and none in Nazareth. Moreover, if He did not belong to the schools, He could not speak or act by inspiration from above, for the Rabbis were the teachers appointed by God. He must do His miracles, as the Rabbis said, by the help of the devil. He could not, they began to think, have come by His knowledge and eloquence by fair means, or in the usual way. He must have unholy aid.

This was enough to turn the Synagogue against Him, and His own words intensified the revolution of feeling, and brought it to a crisis. He frankly told them that He knew they thought "that He should help Himself before helping them, and remove the suspicion and disrespect they growingly felt, by miracles like those of Capernaum, as the only way to convince them of His claims! But He would not do in Nazareth what He had done there, for He well knew that no prophet had any honour in his own country. Had not Elijah confined his miraculous power to strangers, and they heathen, and withdrawn it from Israel? Their hardness of heart enforced the same on Him, and if Israel, as a whole, showed a like spirit, it also would see

His mighty works withdrawn, and shown among the heathen." They could stand no more. The whole synagogue rose in commotion, and in wild uproar hustled Him towards the steep wall of rock hard by, to throw Him from it, headlong. But His time was not yet come. A spell cast on the fierce mob, opened a way for Him, and He passed through them, and left the town unhurt.

This disastrous result so far exceeded all previous experience, that Jesus Himself marvelled at their unbelief. It even fettered His action, for "He could do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick and healed them." He exerted His miraculous power only towards those in whom He found moral sympathy, however imperfect. The human will, mysteriously independent, needed to meet His supernatural might and give it entrance, as if the soul, opposed or indifferent, were wayside soil, on which the seeds of physical, as of moral blessing, fell without fruit.

But, though He left Nazareth never to return, He remained in the neighbourhood for a time, preaching in the villages of the great plain of Esdraelon, far and near. The whole theatre of His activity, however, in this circuit, as in previous ones, was limited beyond ordinary conception. From north to south, between Chorazin, above Capernaum, and Jezreel, in the great plain, was only a distance of ten hours, and from east to west, from Chorazin to Cana, or Nazareth, only six or seven. His whole life was spent in a space represented by one or two English counties, but the seed sown on this speck of ground is yet to cover the earth!

The apostles had now passed through a lengthened and varied experience, and besides the constant instruction of their Master's words and life, had learned from their own hearts how great their moral deficiencies still were. Their faint-heartedness, irresoluteness, and want of faith, were evident, and they were thus brought to that modest self-distrust which alone could fit them for the heavier duties before them. They were now to rise from the position of dependent and simple followers and scholars, and become co-workers with Jesus, and that not only on the good soil already sown, but, rather, on the hard trodden paths, the stony ground, and that pre-occupied by thorns. In Gadara and Nazareth, they had learned to distinguish the opposite aspects of unbelief; in the one, that of common natural selfishness and harshness; in the other, that of proud perverted fanaticism. After long wanderings and continuous trials, the Twelve were now, in their Master's opinion, in a measure prepared to work by themselves in spreading the New Kingdom. In spite of the opposition of the interested professional classes, the enthusiasm of the people to hear the new teaching was unabated. Multitudes followed Jesus wherever He appeared; the synagogues still offered access to the whole population each Sabbath, and in all the cities and villages of Galilee, the "Gospel of the Kingdom" was the great topic of conversation.

The times moreover, were exciting. The whole country rang with the story of a massacre of Galilæans by Pilate, at the last Feast of Tabernacles—perhaps, at the same tumult in which Joseph Barabbas was arrested as a ringleader, to be afterwards freed instead of Jesus. Pilate was always ready to shed the blood of a people he hated, and the hot-blooded Galilæans, ever ready to take affront at the hated infidels, gave him only too many excuses for violence. They had a standing grievance in the sacrifices offered dail yfor the Empire and the Emperor, and at the presence of a Roman garrison and Roman pickets at the Temple, during the feasts, to keep the peace, as Turkish soldiers do at this day, during Easter, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. But Pilate had given special offence, at this time, by appropriating part of the treasures of the Temple, derived from the Temple tax levied on all Jews over the world, and amounting to vast sums in the aggregate—to defray the cost of great conduits he had begun for the better supply of Jerusalem with water. Stirred up by the priests and Rabbis, the people had besieged the government house when Pilate came up to the city at the feast, and with loud continuous cries had demanded that the works be given up. Seditious words against himself, the representative of the Emperor, had not been wanting. He had more than once been forced to yield to such clamour, but this time determined to put it down. Numbers of soldiers, in plain clothes, and armed only with clubs, surrounded the vast mob, and used their cudgels so remorselessly that many, both of the innocent and guilty, were left dead on the spot. The very precincts of the Temple were invaded by the legionaries, and some pilgrims who were so poor that they were slaying their own sacrifices, were struck down while doing so, their blood mingling with that of the beasts they were preparing for the priests, and thus polluting the House of God. It was an unprecedented outrage, and filled every breast in Judea and Galilee with the wildest indignation, though such brawls were of frequent occurrence. The excitement had even penetrated the palace at Tiberias, and kindled bitter ill-feeling in Antipas towards Pilate, for the men slain were Galilæan subjects.

Another misfortune had happened in Jerusalem a short time before. A tower, apparently on the top of Ophel, near the Fountain of the Virgin opposite Siloam, had fallen—perhaps one of the buildings connected with Pilate's public-spirited steps to bring water to the Holy City—and eighteen men had been buried beneath it; in the opinion of the people, as a judgment of God, for their having helped the sacrilegious undertaking.

The cry for a national rising to avenge the murdered pilgrims doubtless rose on every side, but Jesus did not sanction it for a moment. He saw the arm of God even in the hated Romans, and in the fall of the tower, and, instead of sympathizing with them for the one, and joining in a cry for insurrection for the other, told His astonished hearers that the same horrors were like to fall on the whole nation.

"Suppose ye," He asked, "that these Galilæans were sinners above all the Galilæans, because they have suffered such things? I tell you nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all perish in like manner. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, suppose ye that they were sinners above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye will all perish in the same manner." "Israel," He added, "is like a fig-tree, planted by a man in his vineyard, which year after year bore no fruit. Wearied by its barrenness, the householder was determined to cut it down, and it was now spared at the intercession of the vine-dresser, only for another year, to give it a last respite. After that, if it still bore no fruit, he would cut it down, as merely cumbering the ground. That year of merciful delay was the passing moment of His own presence and work among them. The nation had given itself up to a wild dream, that would end in its ruin. Led by the priests and Rabbis, it trusted that God would appear on its behalf, and by a political revolution overthrow the hated foreign domination. The fruits of repentance and faith, which God required, were still wanting. As the vine-dresser, Jesus had done all possible to win them to a better frame. He had warned, besought, counselled; but they were wedded to their sins and their sinful pride. His peaceful kingdom offered them the only escape from ruin, here and hereafter; but as a nation, they were more and more turning towards the worldly schemes of their ecclesiastical leaders, and lent a deaf ear to all proposals of spiritual self-reform. Continuance in this course would bring the fate of those they now lamented on the whole race. If they rejected Him, God would erelong destroy them as a people."

There was still another matter agitating all minds, and helping to keep up the volcanic excitement of the country. John lay still a prisoner, in the black fortress of Machaerus, almost within sight, and each day men wondered if Antipas had yet dared to put him to death.

Under any circumstances, the crowds following Jesus would have touched a heart so tender, but their wild despair and religious enthusiasm made the sight of them doubly affecting. Might they not be won to the peace and joy of the glad tidings? They seemed to Him, the Good Shepherd, like a great flock needing many shepherds, but with none; footsore with long travel, wandering they knew not whither, with no one to lead them to the still waters and green pastures. "The harvest," said He to His disciples, "is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." There were multitudes to be won for the New Kingdom,—multitudes prepared to hear, for their spirits were broken under personal and national sorrow. But the number of right teachers was small.

He decided, therefore, to delay no longer sending forth the Twelve. Calling them together, He told them His purpose, and fitted them to

carry it out. As a proof of their mission from Him, He invested them with authority over spirits, and gave them power to heal diseases. They were to confine themselves for the present to Jewish districts, avoiding Samaritan towns, and not entering on the road to heathen parts. Galilee itself was thus virtually their field of labour, for heathenism had a footing in every place round it, and within a few miles of them lay Gadara, Hippos, Pella, Scythopolis, and even Sepphoris, with heathen worship, in their midst. Judea and Jerusalem were not to be thought of. The simple Galilæans would be a better beginning for the Apostles than the dark bigoted population of the south. One day they would be free to visit Samaria, as He Himself had already. Meanwhile they must not stir up Jewish hatred by going to either Samaritans or heathens. Moreover, their own Jewish prejudices unfitted them for a mission to any but Jews, for, even after this, the first signs of hostility made John wish to call down fire from heaven on a Samaritan village, and they were not fit as yet to handle aright the many questions such a journey would elicit. Besides, Israel must have another year in which to bring forth fruit; and withal, it was their first independent journey.

The burden of their preaching was to be the repetition of that of John, and of Jesus Himself, when He began. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Like John, they were heralds, to prepare the way. "Heal the sick," said He, "raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons." They had received their miraculous gifts freely, and must dispense them as freely. Their equipment was to be of the simplest, for superfluity diverted the mind from their great object, and made an extra burden which would only hinder them on their journeys. It became them, also, by their humble guise, to disarm the suspicion of worldliness, and to show their implicit trust in God. They were to take no money; not even any copper coin, in their girdles—the usual Eastern purse; nor a wallet for their food by the way; nor two under garments, but were to wear only one; nor were they to have shoes, which looked like luxury, but only the sandals of the common people, and they were to have only one staff. They were to go as the peasants of Palestine often do yet, trusting to hospitality for food and shelter; offering in their simplicity a striking contrast to the flowing robes and bright colours of the population at large. But they were not to go alone. Each must have a companion, to accustom them to brotherly communion, to give counsel and help to each other in difficulties, and to cheer each other on the way. We may fancy that Peter was sent with Andrew, James with John, Philip with Bartholomew, the grave Thomas with the practical Matthew, James the Small with Judas the Brave-hearted, and Simon the Zealot with Judas Iscariot; the brother with the brother; the friend with the friend; the zealous with the cold.

No mention is made of the synagogues in their instructions; it may be, because the Apostles were not yet confident enough to come

forward so publicly. It was to be a house to house mission. While every traveller, according to the custom of the country, greeted his acquaintances with laborious formality, raising the hand from the heart to the forehead, and then laying it in the right hand of the person met; even, according to circumstances, bowing thrice, or as many as seven times; they were forbidden to indulge in any greetings by the way. Time was too precious, and their mission too earnest for empty courtesies. On entering a town or village, they were to make inquiries, to guard against their seeking hospitality from the unworthy, but having once become guests, they were to stay in the same family till they left the place. They were to enter the dwelling which heartily welcomed them, with a prayer for its peace. Any house or city, however, that refused to receive them, was to be treated openly as heathen, by their shaking off its dust from their feet as they left it. But woe to such as brought down this wrath; it would be better at the last day for Sodom and Gomorrah than for the Galilæan village in such a case!

To these directions for the way Jesus added warnings that might have well filled with dismay men less devoted. He predicted for them only persecution and universal hatred, jails, public whipping, and even death, but cheered them by the promise that their brave and faithful confession of faith in Him, before governors and kings, would serve His cause, and that endurance to the end would secure their eternal salvation. They would be like helpless sheep in the midst of treacherous wolves. Even their work would be different from what they might expect. To-day it was an olive-branch; to-morrow it would be a sword. Instead of peace, it would divide households and communities, and turn the closest relations into deadly enemies. They would need to labour diligently, for before they had gone over all the towns of Israel, He Himself would come to their aid as the risen and glorified Messiah. They might expect slander, for He Himself had been charged with being in league with the devil, and they could not hope to fare better. They were, however, to be stout of heart, for the Providence that watches the birds of the air would keep them safe. He had nothing to offer in this world, but if they confessed Him here He would confess them, in the great day, before His Father. If, on the other hand, they denied Him, He would, on that day, deny them. He frankly demanded a loyalty so supreme and undivided, that the most sacred claims of blood were to be subordinated to it. Instead of receiving honours, He told them that they might expect to be crucified, as He would be. To save this life by denying Him would be to lose the life to come; but to lose it by fidelity to Him, was to find life eternal. Amidst all this dark anticipation, they need not fear for their bodily wants, for the greater the danger braved the greater would be the reward in His kingdom to those who showed them favour, and this would always secure them friends.

Such an address, under such circumstances, was assuredly never given before or since. To propose to found a kingdom by the services of men, who, as their reward, would meet only shame, torture, and death; to claim from them an absolute devotion, from mere personal reverence and love, with no prospects of reward except those of another world; and to launch an enterprise thus supported only by moral influences, in the face of the opposition of all the authority of the day, simply to win men to righteousness by the display of pure, unselfish devotion to their good, astounds us by the sublime grandeur of the conception.

No details are given of the mission, except that the Twelve went on a lengthened circuit through the towns and villages of Galilee, preaching the need of repentance, and the glad tidings of the New Kingdom; and that their ministry was accompanied by miraculous works of mercy—the casting out devils, and the anointing many sick with oil, and healing them—which were themselves proofs of their higher success, since such wonders were, doubtless, as in the case of their Master, wrought only when there was a measure of faith.

How long this mission lasted is uncertain. It may have embraced weeks, or have extended over months, though, as the first journey of the Twelve, alone, it is not likely to have been very protracted. The success must have been unusual, for, as they appeared, two by two, in the villages of Galilee, the name of Jesus was on every tongue, and penetrated even the gilded saloons of the hated Roman palace of Antipas, at Tiberias. Jesus, Himself, had not been idle while His followers were away, for their departure was the signal for a new, solitary journey, to preach and teach in the various cities. His name was thus spread abroad everywhere, and His claims and character discussed by all. He had been nearly two years before the world, and had steadily risen in popular favour; in spite of the hierarchical party. His claims became the engrossing topic of the day. Hitherto the most opposite views had perplexed all alike. More than all men, Antipas felt his eyes irresistibly fixed on Him, for his conscience was ill at ease. He had at last put John to death, and, true to his superstitious and weak nature, concluded that Jesus was no other than the murdered Baptist risen from the dead, and clothed with the awful powers of the invisible world. Since that dear head had fallen, the weak and crafty worldling had hoped for peace and security, but an awful echo of the voice he had silenced sounded louder and more terrible, from the lips of Jesus, at his very doors. He was now again in Tiberias, and the wide dispersion of a whole band of preachers of the same apparently revolutionary Kingdom, in his immediate territory, seemed a designed defiance of his violence at Machaerus, and its counterstroke. It was certain that, when he gained courage enough, he would try to repeat the murder of the first prophet by that of the second. Suspicion and crafty foresight were his characteristics. Jesus readily, however, learned all that passed respecting

Himself in the palace, for He had followers in it, such as Johanna, the wife of Chouza, and Menahem, the foster-brother of the tetrarch, and He was on His guard.

While Antipas thus interpreted the rumours respecting Jesus, others formed an opinion hardly more acute or thoughtful, who took Him for a second Elias. John and Elijah, in their whole spirit and work, were men devoted to the traditional and outward theocracy. men who looked to the past. Jesus, on the other hand, had proclaimed, even in His consecration sermon on the mountain, that He devoted His life to the founding of a New Covenant. Their opinion was nearer the truth who believed Him a prophet, though distance threw a mysterious glory round the prophets of the past, which they failed to realize of one in their midst.

The news of the death of John seems to have reached Jesus about the same time as the Apostles returned, and, doubtless, seemed the prediction of His own fate. The prospect of the cross had been before His mind from the first, for even at the Jordan He had been announced as the Lamb of God. The Sermon on the Mount had struck the key-note of self-sacrifice, and He had once and again foretold, more or less clearly, that He felt His path would be towards a violent death. It was inevitable that one whom the interest, the pride, and the reputation of the existing ecclesiastical authorities combined to proscribe, must fall before their hostility. Even the prophets, as a rule, had suffered violent deaths, though their protest against the corruption of their day involved no condemnation of the religious economy of the nation. But He had committed Himself deliberately to principles fatal to the theocracy; for He had violated tradition; He had eaten with publicans, and He had denounced the leaders of the people as hypocrites, blind, and wicked. It was a life and death matter for the hierarchical party to try to quench in His own blood the fire He had kindled.

The meeting with the Apostles was likely pre-arranged, and Jesus returned to the neighbourhood of Capernaum, or, perhaps, of Tiberias, to effect it. He had been away for a length of time, and His absence had evidently been deeply felt, for multitudes at once gathered round Him again, as soon as He re-appeared. Every village, far and near, poured out its population to hear Him once more, and the throng was increased by the countless passing bands of pilgrims to the Feast at Jerusalem, for Passover was near at hand. He needed rest, and there was much to hear from the Twelve, but it was impossible to have either the rest or the quiet intercourse amidst such crowds. They had no leisure even to eat. It was, moreover, no longer safe for Him to be in the territories of Antipas. Taking the Twelve with Him, therefore, He crossed over to the tetrarchy of Philip, at the head of the Lake, going by water, and landing at the Plain of Batiha, under the shadow of Bethsaida, or Julias, where He could hope for privacy, and secure a safe retreat in the quiet glens, with their rich green

slopes, passing gradually into the marshes round the entrance of the Jordan into the Lake.

But it was vain to hope for escape. Some had seen Him put off, and watched the direction of the boat till they knew that He was making for Batiha, which was known as one of His resorts. It was only six miles across the water from Capernaum. The news soon spread, and crowds of those most anxious to see and hear Him set out by land for the spot. The distance was farther than by the Lake, but they ran, afoot, out of all the villages, and were waiting for Him when He arrived. He had come for rest, but it was denied Him now as at other times. Looking up as the boat touched the shore, the slopes were alive with multitudes who showed by their very presence that they felt themselves like sheep without a shepherd. The evil times, the restless uneasiness of all, the high religious excitement, the darkness of their spiritual condition, and the equal misery of their national prospects, combined to touch His soul with pity. They had brought all the sick who could be carried, or who could come, and as He passed through the crowds He healed them by a word or touch. They had greater wants, however, than bodily healing, and He could not let them go away uncomforted. Ascending the hill-side, and gathering the vast throng before Him, He "spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and taught them many things."

The day was spent in this arduous labour, but the people still lingered. They had been fed with the bread of truth, and seemed indifferent, for the time, to anything besides. Poor shepherdless sheep! it was His delight, as the Good Shepherd, to lead them to rich pastures, and as they sat and stood round Him, they forgot their bodily wants in the beauty and power of His words.

It was now towards evening, and the company showed no signs of dispersing. Food could not be had in that lonely place, and the Twelve, afraid on this and perhaps other grounds, anxiously urged Jesus to send them away, that they might buy bread in the country round. To their astonishment, however, He told them they must themselves supply them; it would never do to dismiss them hungry: they might faint by the way. No more impossible request could have been made. Between thirty and forty pounds' worth of bread, at the value of money in those days, would be needed to give each even an insufficient share. They could not understand Him. Andrew, perhaps the provider for the band, could only demonstrate their helplessness by saying that the lad in attendance on them had only five loaves of common barley bread—the food of the poor—and two small fishes, but what, he added, were they among so many?

"Make the men sit down," said Jesus. It was in Nisan, "the month of flowers," and the slopes were rich with the soft green of the spring grass—that simplest and most touching lesson of the care of God for all nature. The Twelve presently divided the vast multitude into companies of fifties and hundreds, reminding St. Peter, long

after, from the bright colours of their Eastern dresses, of the flower-beds of a great garden.

This done, like the great Father of the far-stretching household, Jesus took the bread and the fishes, and looking up to Heaven, invoked the blessing of God on their use, and giving thanks for them, as was customary before all meals, proceeded to hand portions to the disciples, who, in turn, gave them to the crowd. Elisha had once fed a hundred men with twenty loaves, and increased the oil in the widow's cruse, and Elijah had made the bread and the oil of the widow of Sarepta endure till the Lord sent rain on the earth. But Christ, from three loaves and two small fishes, not only satisfied the hunger of five thousand men, besides women and children, but did it so royally that the fragments that remained were enough to fill twelve of the little baskets in which Passover pilgrims and other Jews were wont to carry their provisions for the way. More was left than there had been at first!

Jesus had thus supplied the wants of the needy, in a way the full significance of which was as yet far beyond what the disciples either understood or dreamed, for He had shown how there dwelt in Him a virtue sufficient to meet all higher wants, as well as the lower, so that none who believed in Him would ever have either hunger or thirst of soul any longer, but would find in Him their all. Had they known it, He had shown them that He Himself was the Bread of Life, that came down from Heaven. But they at least knew how much they came short of a lofty faith, which, in loving trust, despairs least when the need is greatest, and in the strength of which all is doubled by joyful imparting, while abundance remains instead of want.

The effect on the multitude was in keeping with the ideas of the time. Murmurs ran through the excited throng, that Jesus must be the expected prophet—the Messiah. Like Moses, He had fed Israel by a miracle, in the wilderness, which the Rabbis said the Messiah would do. Surely He would manifest Himself now, if they put Him at their head? They had no higher idea of the Messianic Kingdom than the outward and political, and would hasten its advent by forcing Him, if possible, to proclaim Himself King, and thus open the longed-for war with the hatred Romans, in which God would appear on their behalf.

Material power, not moral preparation, was the national conception of the path to the Messianic triumph. The Rabbis and the people had decided for themselves the way in which the salvation of Israel was to show itself, but between their views and those of Jesus there was a great gulf. He would not use force, and they were bent on it. His refusal to carry out their plan made opposition inevitable, and it necessarily grew deeper each day as that refusal became more clearly final.

While visions of national splendour dazzled the thoughts of His countrymen, the ideal of greatness for Himself and them lay with

Jesus in humiliation. His path was in the lowly valleys, not on the high places of the earth. He aimed only to find the humble and needy, to seek the lost, to serve rather than to be served. Hiding His glory in outward lowliness, and never seeking honour from men, He had, throughout, identified His will with that of God, with a self-restraint which showed the grandest force of will. The outward and material were indifferent to Him, and utterly opposed to the divine purpose, if made an aim in connection with His work. The reign of God in His own soul was the perfect realization of the only kingdom He sought to found in the souls of men at large, and it had nothing in common with the vulgar parade of an earthly royalty.

As soon, therefore, as He perceived the design of the crowd to force Him to act as their leader, and to instal Him at Jerusalem at the head of a national insurrection, He hurriedly left them, and went into the bosom of the hills, beyond their reach. But that He had declined to be led by them to the throne of David, in their way, was, in reality, a step towards the Cross. The very proposal was a foreshadowing of His final rejection and violent death. The solitude of the mountains was His fittest retreat, to strengthen Himself against this new assault of the temptation He had so often repelled, and to gird up His soul for the trials that lay in His path.

At the first signs of tumult among the people, He had sent off the Twelve to cross the Lake again at once, to the Bethsaida near Capernaum, while He dismissed the multitudes. They had waited for Him till night fell, but, at last, as He did not come, they set off without Him. As they rowed, however, a sudden squall, blowing every way, struck down on the Lake from the hills around, and caught their boat. It was the last watch of the night—between three and six o'clock in the wild morning, and the weary boatmen had been toiling at their oars since the night before, but though the whole distance to be rowed was only six miles, they had only made two-thirds of the way. Jesus was not with them to still the wind, and their own strength and skill had availed little. But suddenly, close to the boat, they saw through the gleam of the water and the broken light of the stars, a human form walking on the sea. The sight would have troubled men less superstitious than simple fishermen, and made them cry out in their terror. But it was only momentary, for close at hand, so that it was heard above the wind and the waves, came the words, "Be of good cheer; it is I: be not afraid." in a voice which they knew was that of Jesus. Always impulsive, the warm-hearted Peter could not wait till the Deliverer came among them. "Would not his Master suffer him to come to Him on the water?" Then followed that touching incident which has supplied a lesson for all ages; the safe footing on the waves while the apostle kept his eyes fixed on his Lord, and the instant sinking when his faith gave way—an image of his whole nature, and of all his future life. But the saving hand was near, and with the gentle rebuke, "O thou of

little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" they were in the boat, and as they entered, the wind ceased, so that, presently, with easy sweeps, their oars carried them to the shore.

Like the mass of men, the Twelve were slow at reasoning or applying broadly the plainest lesson. Had they realized the greatness of the miracle they had seen the day before, even the walking on the sea, and the calming of the wind, would have seemed only what they might have expected. But their minds were dull and unreflecting, and their amazement knew no bounds. It is the characteristic of the uneducated, that they think without continuity, and forthwith relapse into stolid vacuity after the strongest excitement. The miracle of the loaves had ceased to be a wonder, for it was some hours old. But this new illustration of the superhuman power of their Master was so transcendent, that their wonder passed into worship. The impression, like many before, might soon lose its force; but for the moment they were so awed that, approaching Him, they kneeled in lowliest reverence, and, through Peter, ever their spokesman, paid Him homage in words then first heard from human lips—"Of a truth Thou art the Son of God."

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE TURN OF THE DAY.

When day broke on the scene of the miraculous meal of the evening before, a number who had slept in the open air, through the warm spring night, still remained on the spot. They had noticed that Jesus did not cross with the Twelve, and fancied that He was still on their side of the Lake. Meanwhile, a number of the boats which usually carried over wood or other commodities, from these eastern districts, had come from Tiberias; blown roughly on their way by the same wind that had been against the disciples. In these, many, finding that Jesus had left the neighbourhood, took passage, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Him. It was one of the days of synagogue worship—Monday or Thursday—and they met Him on His way to the synagogue, to which they accordingly went with Him. Excitement was at its height. News of His arrival had spread far and near, and His way was hindered by crowds, who had, as usual, brought their sick to the streets through which He was passing, in hope of His healing them.

The incidents of the preceding day might well have raised desires for the higher spiritual food which even the Rabbis taught them to expect from the Messiah. But they felt nothing higher than vulgar wonder, and came after Jesus in hopes of further advantages of the same kind, and, above all, that they would still find in Him a second Judas the Gaulonite, to lead them against the Romans. A few, doubtless, had worthier thoughts, but, to the mass, the Messiah's kingdom was

as gross as Mahomet's paradise. They were to be gathered together into the garden of Eden, to eat, and drink, and satisfy themselves all their days, with houses of precious stones, beds of silk, and rivers flowing with wine, and spicy oil for all. It was that He might gain all this for them that they had wished to set Him up as king.

Feeling how utterly He and they were at variance, Jesus resolved to enter into no irrelevant conversation with them, and waiving aside a question as to His crossing the Lake, at once pointed out their misapprehension respecting Him, and urged them not to set their hearts on the perishable food of the body, but to seek earnestly for that food of the soul which secures eternal life. So long as they did not seek this beyond all things else, they missed their highest advantage. As the Son of Man—the Messiah—accredited from God the Father by His wondrous works, He was appointed to give them this heavenly food, and would do so if they showed a sincere desire for it by becoming His disciples.

The Rabbis were accustomed to teach by metaphors, and the people saw at once that He alluded to some religious duty. What it was, however, they did not understand, but fancied He referred to some special works appointed by God. As Jews, they had been painfully keeping all the Rabbinical precepts, in the belief that their doing so gave them a claim above. Yet, if He had some additional injunctions, they were willing to add them to the rest, that they might legally qualify themselves for a share in the New Kingdom of God, as a right. But, instead of multiplied observances, He startled them by announcing that citizenship in the New Theocracy required no more than their believing in Him, as sent from the Father. In this lay all, for the manifold "works of God" would spring naturally from it.

Those of the crowd around who had not seen the miracle of the day before had, doubtless, ere this, heard of it. It had been an amazing proof of supernatural power, but their craving for wonders demanded something still more astounding, as a justification of His claim to be "the Sent of the Father." A voice, perhaps that of some open opponent—for the Rabbis had taken care to be present—therefore broke in, apparently half mocking, with the question, "What 'sign' He had to show, that they might see it, and believe Him? Moses proved his authority by stupendous 'signs.' What sign worthy the name do *you* do, to show your right to introduce new laws, in addition to his, or in their room? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' What voucher as great as this do you offer?"

The miracle of the manna had become a subject of the proudest remembrances and fondest legends of the nation. "God," says the Talmud, "made manna to descend for them, in which were all manner of tastes. Every Israelite found in it what best pleased him. The young tasted bread, the old honey, and the children oil." It had even

become a fixed belief that the Messiah, when He came, would signalize His advent by a repetition of this stupendous miracle. "As the first Saviour—the deliverer from Egyptian bondage," said the Rabbis, "caused manna to fall for Israel from heaven, so the second Saviour—the Messiah—will also cause manna to descend for them once more, for it is written, 'There will be abundance of corn in the land.'" Moses had gradually been half deified. It was taught that God counted him of as much value as all Israel. Most believed that he was five grades in knowledge above all creatures, even angels. The lower part of his body was human; the upper divine. On his entrance to paradise, God left the upper heavens and came to him, and the angels also came and ministered to him, and sang hymns before him. Even the sun, the moon, and the stars came, and craved liberty from him to shine on the world, which they could not have done had he refused.

It was thus only an expression of the public feeling of the day when Jesus was asked to repeat the descent of manna—the greatest of the miracles of Moses. It is in human nature, but above all, in Eastern human nature, to associate high office and dignity with display and outward circumstance, and what must hence have been the popular expectations of external grandeur and majesty in the Messiah, when they saw a demigod in Moses, whom He was to resemble? No demand for overpowering "signs" of the divine approval of a claim to be the Messiah could, in this point of view, be too great, from one whose outward appearance, and whole life, in other respects, so entirely contradicted the general Messianic anticipations.

But Jesus, at all times resolute in withholding miraculous action for any personal end, had no thought of satisfying their craving for wonders. "Moses indeed," said He, "gave you manna, but it was not the true Bread of Heaven." He wished to draw them from the merely outward miracle to that far higher wonder, even then enacting before their eyes, the free offer of the true Bread of Heaven, in the offer of Himself as their Saviour. The manna, He implied, could only by a figure be called bread of Heaven, for it was material and perishable, and the heaven from which it fell was only the visible sky, not that in which God dwells. Moses gave what was called by a figure, "Bread of Heaven," but the *true* Bread of Heaven only His Father could give, and He was giving it now. That only can be the true Bread of God, which comes down from the highest heaven,—He might have said, from the pure heaven of His own soul,—and gives life to the world; for with Jesus, those who had not this bread were spiritually dead.

"Master," cried many voices, "give us this bread henceforth, for life." Like Ponce de Leon, with the spring of Unfading Youth in Florida, they thought that the new gift would literally make them immortal, and eagerly clamoured to have a boon so far in advance of the mere barley loaves of the day before.

"I am the Bread of Life," replied Jesus; in a moment scattering to the winds their visions of material plenty and endless natural life. Then, explaining Himself, He added, "He that comes to me shall never hunger, and he that believes on me shall never thirst. But, as I said a moment ago, you have not only heard of me, but have also seen me, and been eye-witnesses of my deeds as the Messiah, and yet you do not believe. All whom the Father gives me will come to me. You may resist my invitations or yield, but he who resists is not given me by my Father. Believe me, no hungering and thirsting soul that comes to me will I cast out of my Kingdom when it is erected. How could I, indeed, when I have come down from heaven, not to act on my own human will, but only to carry out the will of my Father in Heaven, which is, in this matter,—that, of all—not Jews alone, but all, without exception—whom He has given me I should lose none, but should raise them up in the last day—or, in other words, should give them eternal life."

These words, spoken in the synagogue at Capernaum, created a great sensation. The congregation, comprising some Rabbis and other enemies, had, from time to time, in Jewish fashion, freely expressed their feelings, and had taken such offence at His claim to be the Bread that came down from heaven, that their whispers and murmurs now ran through the whole building. "How can He say He has come down from heaven? We know His father and mother. He is from Nazareth, and would have us believe He is from God above. He is mad. He has a devil. When the Messiah comes, no one will know whence He is."

"Do not murmur among yourselves," said Jesus. "Natural sense is worth nothing in this matter—it will never help you to understand how I am the True Bread come down from heaven. If you wish to know how I can say so, you must submit yourself to the teaching and influence of God: must hear and learn what God says, for it tells us in the prophets—'They shall be all taught of God.' Only those thus taught come to me or believe in me. The yielding your souls to God and your rising thus to communion with Him by spiritual oneness, can alone lead to the faith that recognizes the truth respecting me."

"Perhaps you think," He continued, to paraphrase His words, "that to hear and learn of God, you must yourselves see Him, or commune directly with Him? If so, you greatly err. To see God immediately face to face, is given to no mortal man, but only to Him who is from God. No one but His only-begotten Son, who was in heaven and has come down thence, has seen, and now sees, the Father, and reveals Him to man. Him, therefore, the Son—that is, ME, must you hear; from ME must you learn; if you would hear and learn from God. Amen, amen, I say to you, He that believes on me as—thus—the 'Word' and Revealer of the Father, has everlasting life. I, myself, am, as such, that Bread of Life of which I have

spoken. Your forefathers ate the manna which Moses gave in the wilderness, and died; but it is the grand virture of the true Bread of Heaven, that if a man eat of it—that is, if he receive my words into his soul, he shall not die, but shall have everlasting life."

"I am not only the Life-giving Bread," He continued, "but the Living Bread, and as all that is living communicates life, so whoever eats this only true Bread of Heaven—whoever believes in me—shall live for ever. As the Living Bread I will give myself—my flesh—that is, my life—for the life of the world."

He pointed thus—in language which His hearers could have readily understood, had their minds not been blinded by opposite preconceptions—to His death, as the "Lamb of God," for mankind. This, He implied, must, above all, be received, to secure everlasting life, for so, only, could His claims and authority be felt. He would give His life for the spiritual life of men, as bread is given for their bodily life: the one to be taken by the soul, the other by the body.

The idea of eating, as a metaphor for receiving spiritual benefit, was familiar to Christ's hearers, and was as readily understood as our expressions of "devouring a book," or "drinking in" instruction. In Isaiah iii. 1, the words "the whole stay of bread," were explained by the Rabbis as referring to their own teaching, and they laid it down as a rule, that wherever, in Ecclesiastes, allusion was made to food or drink, it meant study of the Law, and the practice of good works. It was a saying among them—"In the time of the Messiah the Israelites will be fed by Him." Nothing was more common in the schools and synagogues than the phrases of eating and drinking, in a metaphorical sense. "Messiah is not likely to come to Israel," said Hillel, "for they have already eaten Him"—that is, greedily received His words—"in the days of Hezekiah." A current conventionalism in the synagogues was that the just would "eat the Shekinah." It was peculiar to the Jews to be taught in such metaphorical language. Their Rabbis never spoke in plain words, and it is expressly said that Jesus submitted to the popular taste, for "without a parable spake He not unto them."

But nothing blinds the mind so much as preconceived ideas, and dreams of national glory had so inseparably associated themselves with their conception of the Messiah, that a figure, which in other cases would have created no difficulty, led to violent discussion, some contending for the literal sense, which they held as a self-contradiction, others favouring a metaphorical explanation.

Instead, however, of answering the eager questions which now rose, how this could be, Jesus, resolved to break finally with the gross outward ideas of His kingdom which prevailed, only proceeded to carry out the paradox farther, by adding that they must not only eat His flesh, but drink His blood—thus intimating still more clearly His violent death and its mysterious virtue for the salvation of mankind, as He was hereafter to do still more vividly by the abiding

symbols of the Last Supper. On no other condition than by making the lessons and merits of that death their own could they have eternal life, or be raised up at the last day. Without this they were spiritually dead. His flesh and blood were true spiritual food; the heavenly bread of the soul; the nourishment of the divine life within. The hearty recognition and reception of this great truth would create an abiding and intimate communion between Him and those who thus, as it were, fed on Him as their inner life. Living in Him, He would live and reign in them. Nay, as a further result of this intimate spiritual union—this oneness of will and heart with Him, divine life would go forth from Him to those in whom He found it, as it came forth to Himself from the Father. Then, with a repetition of the original figure of His being the bread that came down from heaven; not the manna, of which those who ate were long since dead; but the bread, to eat which gave eternal life, He closed His address.

The Baptist had spoken of the fan in the hand of his great successor: this discourse was the realization of the figure. Those who had hoped to find a popular political leader in Him saw their dreams melt away: those who had no true sympathy for His life and words had an excuse for leaving Him. None who were not bound to Him by sincere loyalty and devotion had any longer a motive for following Him. Fierce patriotism burning for insurrection, mean self-interest seeking worldly advantage, and vulgar curiosity craving excitement, were equally disappointed. It was the first vivid instance of "the offence of the Cross"—henceforth to become the special stumbling-block of the nation. The wishes and hopes of the crowds who had called themselves disciples had proved self-deceptions. They expected from the Messiah quite other favours than the identity of spiritual nature symbolized by the eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The bloody death implied in the metaphor was in direct contradiction to all their ideas. A lowly and suffering Messiah thus unmistakably set before them was revolting to their national pride and gross material tastes. "We have heard out of the Law," said some, a little later, "that the Christ abideth for ever, and how sayest thou the Son of man must be 'lifted up,'—that is, crucified?" "That be far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee," said even Peter almost at the last, when he heard from his Master's lips of the Cross, so near at hand. The Messiah of popular conception would use force to establish His kingdom, but Jesus, while claiming the Messiahship, spoke only of self-sacrifice. Outward glory and material wealth were the national dream: He spoke only of inward purity. If He would not head them with Almighty power, to get Judea for the Jews, they would not have Him. Their idea of the kingdom of God was the exact opposite of His.

The discourse had been interrupted in its progress, and, now, at its close, the murmuring and whispering grew more earnest than

ever. "This is a hard saying," was the general feeling, "who can bear it?" "No one could submit to such self-denial," said one. "I don't understand it," said another. "Blasphemy," said a third. "He claims to be God." "He is not the Messiah for me," said a fourth. Jesus, now on His way out of the synagogue, noticed all. "Does what I have said offend you?" said He. "If, now, while I am with you, you think my words hard, and stumble at them, what will you say when I tell you that when I have returned to heaven, whence I came, you will still have to eat my flesh and drink my blood, to become, through me, partakers of eternal life? Do you not see from this that I speak in metaphor, and that you are not to take my words literally, but in their spirit and inner meaning? It is not my flesh you are to eat, but my words, which you have just heard. These you must receive into your hearts, and they will quicken you into spiritual life, for they are spirit and life. If you do not believe on me as the true Messiah, by His death the life of the world—but expect only a national salvation from my visible bodily presence—as one who will live on earth for ever, and reign in deathless splendour —you must find what I have said an offence. But he who desires from me, as the Messiah, only the hidden life of the soul, its renewal in the holy image of God, and His reign within, will find no offence in any of my words. The truths I have told you are spirit and life, and quicken the soul that receives them into a heavenly life as bread quickens the body. My mere outward natural life, as such, profits you nothing. If my words have been hard to any, it is because they do not believe in me, for only the believing heart can realize their truth."

In the Sermon on the Mount, which inaugurated His public ministry, Jesus had contrasted the theocratic forms of pupilage and the letter, with the Law of the New Kingdom; a law of the spirit and liberty. In this address to the people He contrasted with the theocratic life in its mere outwardness and its slavery to forms, the new life from God which He made known—a life kindled and maintained by the Spirit from above—the gift of the Heavenly Father. The dead letter; the outward material flesh; He told them, profited nothing: the form, the rite, the dogma, the institution, however venerable in itself—even His own flesh, as the symbol of mere material life, had no magic virtue. Only the inward essence, the truth embodied, the living principle, the quickening spirit received into the heart, availed with God, or sustained the heavenly life in the soul. The life-giving Spirit as it flows from the infinite fulness of God, and reproduces itself in the heart, was the true manna of humanity in the wilderness of the world.

The false enthusiasm which had hitherto gathered the masses round Jesus was henceforth at an end, now that their worldly hopes of Him as the Messiah were exploded. His discourse had finally undeceived them. He was founding a mysterious spiritual kingdom:

they only cared for a kingdom of this world. It became for the first time clear that no worldly rewards or honours were to be had by following Him, but only spiritual gifts and benefits, for which most of them cared nothing. They wanted to see wonders, to eat bread from heaven that would protect them from dying, and to get places and wealth in the new kingdom when finally set up. They had looked on Jesus as a miracle-worker rather than a spiritual Saviour, and wished to be healed rather by touching His garments than by sympathy and communion with His Spirit. But He had come to save sinners, not to work miracles, even of healing: to be a physician of souls, not of bodies. He had disenchanted the insincere and selfish who had hitherto flocked after Him, and they forthwith showed their altered feelings. From the moment of this address, the crowds that had thronged Him began to disappear, returning to their homes, doubtless in angry disappointment. It seemed as if He would be entirely forsaken. Could it be that even the Twelve would leave Him? He knew them too thoroughly to look for any answer but an earnest assurance of their loyalty. Yet it was well to put them to the test, and strengthen their faith by trying it. "Do you, also, wish to leave me?" asked He. "To whom, Lord, shall we go away?" answered Peter, ever the first to speak,—"Thou hast words of eternal life, and we have believed and known that Thou art the Holy One of God." But even in the Twelve, as Jesus knew, the fan had chaff to separate from the wheat. "Did not I myself choose you Twelve to be specially my own, and one (even) of *you* is a devil? Beware of self-confidence. If you think you stand, take heed lest you fall!" Eleven, as we know, refused to leave Him. Did the first thought of treachery rise in the mind of Judas with the blasting of worldly hopes entertained, almost unconciously, till now? His Master had never before spoken so plainly. Henceforth, to follow Him clearly meant to give up all worldly aims or prospects, and voluntarily choose a life, and it might be a death, of self-denial and self-sacrifice for the nation and the world—or act the hypocrite with a faint hope of ulterior advantage.

Jesus had not gone to the Passover, for it would have been unsafe to have shown Himself in Jerusalem. His disciples, however, doubtless went up, for no Jew neglected to do so if possible. He had now been publicly teaching for some months over a year in Galilee, and had not revisited Judea, except for a few days at the Passover before, since His first discouraging circuit in the south. The north had received Him with a warmth and frankness that had won His heart by the contrast with the cold self-righteous bigotry of Judea. It had given Him the Twelve, and the ready audience He had found had enabled Him to make a small but healthy beginning of the New Kingdom. The impulsive, excitable Galilæans seemed for a time, indeed, likely, almost as a whole, to leave the Rabbis for His new teaching. But the movement had been checked, and the popular

favour chilled by the restless efforts of the party threatened. Weak in the north, they had sent word to Jerusalem of the success of the Teacher from Nazareth, whom the orthodoxy of Judea had refused to follow. The Rabbis of the capital—known variously as "the Pharisees," "Scribes," or Sopherim,—"lawyers,"—"masters of the traditions"—"Hakamin or wise men,"—"doctors,"—"expounders of the Law,"—and "disputers" of the Gospels and the Epistles; and the official ecclesiastical world at large—the priests, canonists, and preachers of Judaism had their stronghold in the Temple courts, and rivalled the bigotry of the more modern Mollahs and Softas of Mecca and Medina. At the first hint of danger, a deputation had been sent to Capernaum, but they had failed to carry the people with them in their attempts to fix charges on the new Teacher. He had defended Himself so dexterously against their allegations of Sabbath-breaking and blasphemy, that for the time they retired discomfited. Fresh news from the north, however, had again roused them. More Rabbis appeared, sent by the authorities in Jerusalem, to see if the rash Innovator could not be crushed, and their presence speedily led to a further conflict.

In the training of the Twelve for their future work it was necessary, above all things, to create and foster the conception of moral freedom; for the central point in the contrast between the New Kingdom and the old Theocracy was its liberty, as opposed to the bondage to the letter that had prevailed. The deep and pure religiousness Christ demanded could only flourish where the conscience was quickened, and made responsible by a sense of perfect spiritual freedom. He had already announced this great principle in the Sermon on the Mount. The Twelve had been disciplined in it by their mission journeys, but new illustrations showed, day by day, how hard it was for them to emancipate themselves from hereditary prejudices, and from Rabbinical authority.

The very foundation of the new Society was in itself a breaking away from the established theocracy, and it necessarily led to continually more decisive acts of independence and separation. The Jewish theologians of the Pharisaic party, with their pedantic devotion to precedent and form, and their claim to direct the conscience of the people, had to a great extent produced a mere outward religionism which had weakened the moral sense of the nation, and withered up all aspirations for spiritual manhood and liberty of thought. They were very popular as the reverend and zealous defenders of the holy Law handed down from the Fathers, almost from the first. They had recognized in Jesus, still more than in His hated and feared predecessor, the Baptist, a deadly foe, and the success of the new teaching in Galilee imperilled their influence if it remained unchecked. With keen foresight they had sought to anticipate the danger, but hitherto had failed so ignominiously, that they had for some time past refrained from open attack, contenting themselves

with a secret hostility of dark hints suspicions, and blasphemies, to poison the minds of the people. Till now, however, Jesus had made no direct attack on them, but, while watched and assailed, had kept strictly on the defensive. Henceforth, He took a different course. To expose their innuendoes and calumnies was no longer enough. He felt constrained, for the future, to show that not He but His accusers were really obnoxious to the charges made against Him so recklessly; that not He but they were leading the people from the right way, and acting under unholy influence, and that *their* zeal for God was blind, not His.

A new attack by them led to this change. Reports of the popular readiness to accept Him as Messianic King, and of His resolute refusal to head such a political movement, which alone could meet their own wishes, had doubtless reached Jerusalem, and this, coupled with rumours of His innovations and independence as a religious reformer, had thoroughly alarmed the authorities at Jerusalem. Discarding invective, craft, or indirect approach, their deputies now came, no longer to the disciples, but to Himself, with specific complaints, which the freedom of Eastern manners, permitting free access to private life, had enabled them to establish. The disciples had already given offence by plucking and rubbing ears of barley on the Sabbath, and thus, as it was held, reaping and threshing on the sacred day; but a still graver scandal in Pharisaic eyes had been detected in their sitting down to eat without ceremonially washing their hands. The Law of Moses required purifications in certain cases, but the Rabbis had perverted the spirit of Leviticus in this, as in other things, for they taught that food and drink could not be taken with a good conscience when there was the possibility of ceremonial defilement. If every conceivable precaution had not been taken, the person or the vessel used might have contracted impurity, which would thus be conveyed to the food, and through the food to the body, and by it to the soul. Hence it had been long a custom, and latterly a strict law, that before every meal not only the hands but even the dishes, couches, and tables should be scrupulously washed.

The legal washing of the hands before eating was especially sacred to the Rabbinist; not to do so was a crime as great as to eat the flesh of swine. "He who neglects hand-washing," says the book Sohar, "deserves to be punished here and hereafter." "He is to be destroyed out of the world, for in hand-washing is contained the secret of the ten commandments." "He is guilty of death." "Three sins bring poverty after them," says the Mischna, "and to slight hand-washing is one." "He who eats bread without hand-washing," says Rabbi Jose, "is as if he went in to a harlot." The later Schulchan Aruch, enumerates twenty-six rules for this rite in the morning alone. "It is better to go four miles to water than to incur guilt by neglecting hand-washing," says the Talmud. "He who does not wash his hands after eating," it says, "is as bad as a murderer." The devil

Schibta sits on unwashed hands and on the bread. It was a special mark of the Pharisees that "they ate their daily bread with due purification," and to neglect doing so was to be despised as unclean.

Rabbinism was now in its highest glory, for the great teachers Hillel and Schammai, who were hardly a generation dead, had developed it to the uttermost. They had disputed so fiercely, indeed, on many trifling details, that it was often said that Elias himself, when he came, would hardly be able to decide between them. But they agreed respecting hand-washing, so that the Talmud maintains that "any one living in the land of Israel, eating his daily food in purification, speaking the Hebrew of the day, and morning and evening praying duly with the phylacteries, is certain that he will eat bread in the kingdom of God."

It was laid down that the hands were first to be washed clean. The tips of the ten fingers were then joined and lifted up so that the water ran down to the elbows, then turned down so that it might run off to the ground. Fresh water was poured on them as they were lifted up, and twice again as they hung down. The washing itself was to be done by rubbing the fist of one hand in the hollow of the other. When the hands were washed before eating they must be held upwards; when after it, downwards, but so that the water should not run beyond the knuckles. The vessel used must be held first in the right, then in the left hand; the water was to be poured first on the right, then on the left hand, and at every third time the words repeated "Blessed art Thou who hast given us the command to wash the hands." It was keenly disputed whether the cup of blessing or the hand-washing should come first; whether the towel used should be laid on the table or on the couch; and whether the table was to be cleared before the final washing or after it."

This anxious trifling over the infinitely little was, however, only part of a system. If a Pharisee proposed to eat common food, it was enough that the hands were washed by water poured on them. Before eating Terumah—the holy tithes and the shew-bread—they must be dipped completely in the water, and before the portions of the holy offerings could be tasted, a bath must be taken. Hand-washing before prayer, or touching anything in the morning, was as rigidly observed, for evil spirits might have defiled the hands in the night. To touch the mouth, nose, ear, eyes, or the one hand with the other, before the rite, was to incur the risk of disease in the part touched. The occasions that demanded the observance were countless: it must be done even after cutting the nails, or killing a flea. The more water used, the more piety. "He who uses abundant water for hand-washing," says R. Chasda, "will have abundant riches." If one had not been out it was enough to pour water on the hands; but one coming in from without needed to plunge his hands into the water, for he knew not what uncleanness might have been near him

while in the streets, and this plunging could not be done except in a spot where there were not less than sixty gallons of water.

The same scrupulous, superstitious minuteness extended to possible defilements of all the household details of daily life. Dishes, hollow or flat, of whatever material, knives, tables, and couches, were constantly subjected to purifications, lest they should have contracted any Levitical defilement by being used by some one unclean.

This ritual exaggeration was, apparently, a result of the jealousy between the democratic Pharisees and the lordly Sadducees. The latter attached supreme importance to the ceremonial sanctity of the officiating priests, to exalt themselves as the clerical aristocracy. The Pharisees, to humble them, laid the stress, as far as possible, on the vessels used, and the exactness of the act. In keeping with their endless washings in private, they demanded that all the vessels of the Temple itself should be purified after each feast, lest some unclean person might have defiled them—a refinement which drew down on a Pharisee who was carrying out even the golden candlestick itself to wash it, after a feast, the mocking gibe from a Sadducee, that he expected before long the Pharisees would give the sun a washing.

The authority for this endless, mechanical religionism was the commands or "traditions" of the Fathers, handed down from the days of the Great Synagogue, but ascribed with pious exaggeration to the Almighty, who, it was said, had delivered them orally to Moses on Mount Sinai. Interpretations, expositions, and discussions of all kinds were based, not only on every separate word, or on every letter, but even on every comma and semicolon, to create new laws and observances, and where these were not enough, oral traditions, said to have been delivered by God to Moses on Sinai, were invented to justify new refinements. These "traditions" were constantly increased, and formed a NEW LAW, which passed from mouth to mouth, and from generation to generation; till, at last, public schools rose for its study and development, of which the most famous were those of Hillel and Schammai, in the generation before Jesus, and even, perhaps, in His early childhood. In His lifetime it was still a fundamental rule that they should not be committed to writing. It was left to Rabbi Judah, the Holy, to commence the collection and formal engrossing of the almost countless fragments of which it consisted, and from his weary labour ultimately rose the huge folios of the Talmud.

As in the case of the Brahminical theocracy of India, that of Judea attached more importance to the ceremonial precepts of its schools than to the sacred text on which they were based. Wherever Scripture and Tradition seemed opposed, the latter was treated as the higher authority. Pharisaism openly proclaimed this, and set itself, as the Gospel expresses it, in the chair of Moses, displacing the great lawgiver. "It is a greater offence," says the Mischna, "to teach anything contrary to the voice of the Rabbis, than to contradict Scrip-

ture itself. He who says, contrary to Scripture, 'It is not lawful to wear the Tephillin'"—the little leather boxes containing texts of Scripture, bound, during prayer, on the forehead and on the arm—"is not to be punished as a troubler. But he who says there should be five divisions in the Totaphoth"—another name for the Tephillin, or phylacteries—"and thus teaches differently from the Rabbis, is guilty." "He who expounds the Scriptures in opposition to the Tradition," says R. Eleazar, "has no share in the world to come." The mass of Rabbinical prescriptions—not the Scripture—was regarded as the basis of religion, "for the Covenant of God was declared to have been made with Israel on account of the oral Law, as it is written, 'After the tenor of these *words* I have made a covenant,' &c. For God knew that, in after ages, Israel would be carried away among strange people, who would copy off the written Law, and, therefore, He gave them the oral Law, that His will might be kept secret among themselves." Those who gave themselves to the knowledge of the Traditions "saw a great light," for God enlightened their eyes, and showed them how they ought to act in relation to lawful and unlawful things, clean and unclean, which are not told thus fully and clearly in Scripture. It was, perhaps, good to give one's self to the reading of the Scripture, but he who reads diligently the Traditions receives a reward from God, and he who gives himself to the Commentaries on these traditions has the greatest reward of all. "The Bible was like water, the Traditions like wine, the Commentaries on them like spiced wine." "My son," says the Talmud, "give more heed to the words of the Rabbis than to the words of the Law." So exactly alike is Ultramontanism in every age, and in all religions!

Jesus had no sympathy with a system which thus ignored conscience, and found the essence of religion in the slavery of outward forms. The New Kingdom was in the heart; in the loving sonship of the Father in Heaven, and all outward observances had value only as expressions of this tender relationship. The Pharisees had refined the Law into a microscopic casuistry which prescribed for every isolated act, but Jesus brought it into the compass of a living principle in the soul. From the outer particular requirement, He passed to the spirit it was intended to express. Special enactments were suffered to fall aside, if the vital idea they embodied were honoured. A lifetime was hardly enough to learn the Rabbinical precepts respecting offerings, but Jesus virtually abrogated them all by the short utterance that "mercy was better than sacrifice." The schools had added to the simple distinctions of the Law between clean and unclean beasts, endless distinctions respecting different parts of each, and the necessary rites; the simple rule of Jesus was—It is not what enters the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes from the heart. The Rabbis contended after what uses vessels should be purified in running, after what in drawn water, and how wooden and metal dishes were to be minutely discriminated. Jesus waived aside this trifling and

deadly pedantry, and told His hearers to take care to have what was within clean, and then the outside would be clean also. Even the Sabbath laws, with their countless enactments, were as briefly condensed. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day." "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." Such teaching was unheard of in Israel. It was revolutionary in the grandest sense.

The deputation of Rabbis now sent to Capernaum were determined to bring matters to a crisis. Their spies, and, perhaps, themselves, had carefully gathered evidence whether Jesus and His disciples observed the traditions, and carried them out with the minuteness of a recognized religious duty; whether He and they dipped their hands duly before eating; whether they held them up or down in doing so, whether they wetted them to the elbows or to the knuckles, or wetted only the finger-tips, as the school of Schammai prescribed for certain cases; and they had found, to their horror, that neither He nor His disciples washed their hands thus ceremonially at all. The next Passover would show how formally they had laid their information against Him, before the Sanhedrim, with its leaders, the high priest Caiaphas and the powerful Hannas, for such independence and audacity.

Meanwhile, their demand for an explanation gave Jesus the desired opportunity to break, finally, with their whole party. A casuistry worthy of Suarez or Escobar, had sapped the fundamental principles of morality in the name of religion. With a keen eye to the interests of their caste, the Rabbis had trifled with the subject of oaths and vows in such a way that the treasury of the Temple was not only sacred from all public appeals, but was continually enriched by money, which ought, rightfully, to have gone to the support of families and relations, and even of aged or poor parents. The utterance of the word "Corban"—"I have vowed it to sacred uses"—sequestrated anything, absolutely and irreversibly, to the Temple. It might be spoken under the influence of death bed terror, or in the weakness of superstitious fear, but if once uttered, the Church threw round the money or property thus secured the impassable barrier of her ghostly claims.

To honour one's parents was one of the "Ten Words" of Sinai, and no duty was held more sacred by a Jew unperverted by Rabbinical sophistry. It was not forgotten that it was the one commandment to which a promise of reward was attached. "A child is bound to maintain his parents when old and helpless," says one passage in the Talmud, "even if he have to beg to do so." But this, unfortunately, was not the uniform teaching of Christ's day. If one Rabbi had put filial duty before the right to vow for one's own advantage, others had taught that it was a duty to honour God before honouring human relationships—a smooth phrase for legalizing gifts to the Church at the expense even of father and mother. The hierarchical party ignored all interests but their own, and subordinated natural

duty to their own enrichment. Pharisaism, in its moral decay, had come to be a spiritual death, corrupting the springs of national life. A few years later, in the time of the great famine of the year A.D. 45, under Claudius, the theocratic party so heartlessly cared for themselves, that while the people were perishing of hunger by hundreds, no remission of Temple dues was permitted, and the Passover alone saw forty-one attic bushels of wheat presented at the altar, to be presently removed for the use of the priests, though the issarion—a measure of three and a half pints—sold for four drachmas, a sum equal to about twenty-six shillings at the present value of money. Josephus, indeed, boasts that no priest ate a crumb of the grain thus relentlessly hoarded, but when even a high priest was known as "the disciple of gluttons," rioting in great feasts on the sacrifices and wine of the altar, the mass of his order would not be fastidious about the wheat and the bread.

Representatives of this smooth hypocrisy had now gathered round Jesus, and proceeded to inquire into His alleged unlawful acts. "How comes it," asked they, "that a teacher who claims a higher sanctity than others can quietly permit His disciples to neglect a custom imposed by our wise forefathers, and so carefully observed by every pious Israelite? How is it that they do not wash their hands before eating?"

"They neglect only a ceremony introduced by men," retorted Jesus; "but how comes it that you, who know the Law, transgress commands which are not of man, but from God Himself? How comes it that, for the sake of traditions invented by the Rabbis, you set aside the most explicit commands of God? He has, for example, said that we must honour our father and mother, and support and care for them in old age. He has declared it worthy of death for any one to deny his parents due reverence, or to treat them harshly or with neglect. But you have invented a doctrine which absolves children, in many cases, from this commandment. 'If any one,' says your 'tradition,' 'is asked by his parents for a gift, or help, for their benefit, he has only to say that he has vowed that very part of his means to the Temple, and they cannot press him further to contribute to their support.' How cunningly have you thus circumvented God's law! How easy is it for any one to break it, and affect a zeal for religion in doing so!

"Ye hypocrites!—acting religion"—now for the first time thus denouncing them and their party—"well has Isaiah painted you when he introduces God as saying, 'This nation has its worship in words, and its religion is of the lips, while its heart is far from me. Their service of me is worthless, for it is not my Law, but only human invention.' These words describe you to the letter. You put aside what God has commanded, and has enforced by promises and threats, and yet keep, superstitiously, 'traditions' which only custom, and homage to human teachers, have intro-

duced. Of this kind are your hand-washings, and many similar usages."

Such a defence was an open declaration of war against Pharisaism, and the hierarchy closely indentified with it. His words struck at the insincerity and false-heartedness of the party as a whole, at its fundamental principles, its practice, its modes of thought, its whole ideas and aims. They are pious, very pious, He tells them, in outward seeming. They keep the traditions fastidiously, but their piety is from the lips, not the heart; obedience to the Rabbis, not God. They wash pots and cups, and care for gifts, as their religion, and ignore the commands of Jehovah. No irony could be more keen or annihilating. What flames of rage must it have kindled in the hearts of the great party so mortally assailed! They could not challenge His loyalty to the higher law, for He spoke as its Champion, against their human additions and perversions. They could not but feel that, far from destroying either the Law or the Prophets, He was ennobling and exalting them. But the very light He poured on the oracles of God showed so much the more the worthlessness of their cherished system, and their misconception of their office as the teachers of the people. He had virtually condemned not only their setting washings above duty to parents; He had denounced them for laying more stress on the Temple worship and ritual than on such filial piety. Hence washings, sacrifices, alms, and fasts; all the loved boastful, pretentious worship and outward practice on which they rested, were of no value compared with the great eternal commands of God, and were even crimes and impiety, when they proudly set themselves in their room. He arraigned Pharisaism, the dominant orthodoxy, as a whole. The system, so famous, so arrogant, so intensely Jewish, was only an invention of man; a subversion of the Law it claimed to represent, an antagonism to the prophets as well as to Moses, the spiritual ruin of the nation!

The die was finally cast. All that it involved had been long weighed, but He who had come into the world to witness to the Truth could let no prudent regard for self restrain His testimony. It was vital that the people who followed the Rabbis and priests should know what the religion and morals thus taught by them were worth. The truth could not find open ears while men's hearts were misled and prejudiced by such instructors. No one would seek inward renewal who had been taught to care only for externals, and to ignore the sin and corruption within. Pharisaism was a creed of moral cosmetics and religious masks, as all ritual systems must ever be. With Jesus the only true religion was purity of heart and absolute sincerity to truth. Leaving the Rabbis, therefore, and calling round Him the crowd which was lingering near, He proclaimed aloud the great principle He had laid down—"Hear me, all of you," cried He, "and understand. There is nothing from without the man that, entering into him, can defile him; but the things which come out of the man

are those that defile him." Words clear enough to us, perhaps, but grand beyond thought when uttered, for they were the knell of caste —heard now, for the first time, in the history of the world; of national divisions and hatreds, and of the religious worth of external observances, as such, and the inauguration of a universal religion of spirit and truth! Nothing external, they proclaimed, made clean or unclean, holy or unholy. Purity and impurity were words applicable only to the soul and its utterances and acts. The charter of spiritual religion: the abrogation of the supremacy of forms and formula for ever, was at last proclaimed; the leaven of religious freedom cast into the life of humanity, in the end, to leaven it throughout!

Even the disciples were alarmed at an attitude so revolutionary. In common with the nation at large, they looked on the Rabbis with a superstitious reverence, and now hastened to tell Jesus how deeply the whole class was offended by His words. It was hard for simple Galilæan peasants to break away from hereditary habits of thought. But Christ's answer was ready. "Every plant which my Heavenly Father has not planted, shall be rooted out. Leave them: they are blind leaders of the blind, and, as such, both they and their followers must stumble on to destruction!" The plants of human, not divine planting, were the "traditions" and "commandments of men" —the "hedge of the Law," in which the Rabbis gloried. Henceforth, there was a breach for ever between the men of the Schools and the New Kingdom.

But the mind is slow to realize great spiritual truths. To the disciples, their Master's words were dark and strange, demanding explanation. Nor was it possible, either then, or even to the very last, to familiarize them with the new ideas they involved, or free them from the influence of past modes of thought. The tendency to regard the external and formal as a vital and leading characteristic of religion, was well-nigh unconquerable, in minds habituated to Jewish conceptions. An earnest request of Peter, for further explanation, only drew forth an amplification of what had been already said. The evil in man was traced directly to the thoughts; but to eat with unwashed hands, it was repeated, made a man in no way "common" or polluted, as alleged by the Pharisees. Yet the truth had to lie long in the breasts of the Twelve before it wrought their spiritual emancipation from the slavery of the past. The natural and eternal distinction of good and evil was proclaimed, after having been obscured for ages by an artificial morality, but to fully unlearn inveterate prejudice would require the lapse of generations.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE COASTS OF THE HEATHEN.

Jesus had now, apparently, been two years before the world as a religious teacher, and had had the usual lot of those who seek to reform entrenched and prosperous abuses. A brief and dazzling popularity had roused the bitter hostility of threatened interests, and they had at last banded together for His destruction. For months past He had seen the death-clouds gathering ever more threateningly over Him, and had devoted Himself with calm anticipation of the end, to the task of training the Twelve to continue His work when He had perished. He had taken the utmost care to avoid open collision with His enemies, and to confine Himself to the instruction of the little circle round Him; but the priests and Rabbis had been quick to see in this very quiet and retirement their greatest danger, for open conflict might destroy what peaceful seclusion would give opportunity to take root. "The world," as He Himself expressed it, "hated Him, because He witnessed of it that its works were evil." Not only His formal accusations and the spirit of His teaching, but His whole life and actions, and even His gentlest words, arraigned things as they were.

Rumours of possible action against Him by Antipas increased the difficulty of the situation. Every one knew that He and many of His followers had come from the school of the Baptist, whom Antipas had just murdered, and it was evident that His aim was more or less similiar to John's, though His acts were more wonderful. Hence speculation was rife respecting Him. Was He the promised Elias? or, at least, Jeremiah, risen from the dead? or was He some special prophet sent from God? Many, indeed, were questioning if He might not even be the Messiah, and were willing to accept Him as such, if He would only head a national revolt, in alliance with the Rabbis and priests, against the Romans. To Antipas His appearance was doubly alarming, for it seemed as if the fancied revolutionary movement of John had broken out afresh more fiercely than ever, and superstition, working in an uneasy conscience, easily saw in Him a resurrection of the murdered Baptist, endowed, now, with the awful power of the eternal world from which he had returned. A second murder seemed needed to make the first effective, and to avoid this additional danger Jesus for a time sought concealment.

But the craft and violence of the half-heathen Antipas, was a slight evil compared with the hatred which glowed ever more intensely in the breasts of the Rabbis and priests of Jerusalem, and in those of the Pharisees, and other disciples of the schools, scattered over the country. The demands of Jesus were far beyond the mere summons

of the Baptist, to prepare for a new and better time. He required immediate submission to a new Theocracy. He excited the fury of the dominant party, not like the Baptist, by isolated bursts of denunciation, but by working quietly, as a King in His own kingdom, which, while in the world, was something far higher. Hence, the feeling against Him was very different from the partial, cautious, and intermittent hatred of the Baptist. The hierarchy and the Rabbis, as the centre of that which, with all its corruptions, was the only true religion on earth as yet, felt themselves compromised directly and fatally by Him, and could not maintain themselves as they were, if He were tolerated. The whole spiritual power of Israel was thus arrayed against Him; a force slowly created by the possession, for ages, of the grandest religious truths known to the ancient world, and by the pride of a long and incomparably sublime national history. It had been assailed in the past, at long intervals, from without, but in recent years it had been for the first time attacked from within, by the Baptist, and now felt itself still more dangerously assaulted by this Galilæan. To crush such an apparently insignificant opponent —a peasant of Nazareth, rising, singly and unsupported, against a power so colossal—seemed easy; nor could it be fancied more difficult to scatter and destroy His small band of followers, as yet, mostly, despised peasants.

The first official step towards the repression of the new movement had, apparently, been already taken, on the occasion of the last visit of Jesus to Jerusalem. His cure of the blind man on the Sabbath, had then brought down on Him the warning punishment of the lesser excommunication, which entailed formal exclusion from the synagogues of Judea, and was all they dared as yet inflict. In consequence of it, He had never returned to the south, but confined Himself to the north, where the synagogues were still open to Him. The same sentence seems now to have been gradually extended to the synagogues of Galilee, for we cease to read of His entering them or teaching in them. But as this measure evidently failed, spies were let loose on Him, to dog His steps constantly, and find ground for fresh charges, even by invading the privacy of His home life.

This deadly hatred, with all that it involved in the future, had been foreseen from the first, and His utmost care, His seclusion, and His innocence, had only delayed the crisis that had now come. The foundation of His new kingdom on a firm basis, by the choice and preparation of the Twelve, had, however, lightened the thought of it, and neutralized its worst consequences. Yet it was still necessary to ward off the catastrophe as long as possible, in order to advance the great work of building up, as far as might be, the infant society He had established; for it was slow work to ripen vigorous faith and adequate spirituality, even in those under His personal influence. But the growing hatred and ill-will of His enemies made lengthened residence in any one place henceforth undesirable, and He had from

this time to take more frequent, as well as wider circuits, to escape them. Yet there were compensating benefits even in this wandering life, for it made it easier, amidst the many unforeseen incidents of each day, to raise the Twelve to that higher faith and greater steadfastness which yet failed them, and it enabled Him to help many in outlying parts, who were fitted to receive good at His hands. The gracious purpose of God was thus leading Him to visit in peace all the chief places of the land, which it was His great mission to summon to enter His kingdom.

One inevitable result was that the nearer the end came, the more necessary was it to make clear to the Twelve the causes of this hatred shown towards Him, and the divine necessity of His approaching death. Hence, He took every opportunity from this time to impress both thoughts more and more clearly on His followers. His warnings against the corruptions of the Hierarchical party became more frequent, and constantly keener, until, at last, the Twelve understood, in some measure, the whole situation.

Leaving the shores of the Sea of Galilee, He now turned to the far north, with the Twelve as companions of His flight. His way led Him over the rough uplands towards Safed, with its near view of the snowy summits of Lebanon. Then, leaving Gischala on the right, the road passed through one of the many woody valleys of these highland regions, till, at the distance of two days' journey from the Lake, it reached the slope at the foot of which lay the plains of Tyre. A yellow strip of beach and sand divides the hills from the sea, into which the insular tongue of land on which Tyre was built stretched far. He looked down, perhaps for the first time so closely, on the smoking chimneys of the glass works of Sidon and of the dye works at Tyre; on the long rows of warehouses filled with the merchandise of the world; on the mansions, monuments, public buildings, palaces, and temples of the two cities, and their harbours and moles crowded with shipping. The busy scene before Him was the land of the accursed Canaanite; the seat of the worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, which had of old so often corrupted Israel; a region, with all its wealth and splendour, and surpassing beauty of palm groves, and gardens, and embowering green, so depraved and polluted, that the Hebrew had adopted the name of Beelzebub—one of its idols—as the name for the Prince of Devils. Yet, even here, Jesus felt a pity and charity unknown to His nation, and the great sea beyond, whitened with wing-like sails, would be like a dream of the future, when distant lands, washed by the waves over which these vessels sped, would gladly receive the message He came to deliver.

Whether He passed into heathen territory is a question. He may only have gone as far as the border of the alien district. The whole region was more or less thickly settled by Jews, drawn by commerce, or through long historic association with the district, which had been assigned to Asshur, though never won by that tribe. So far back as

the days of the judges, the population had been half heathen, half Jewish. Kept back, through all their history, from the sea-coast, Israel had come to hate the life of a sailor from which they were thus debarred, and hence were contented to settle amidst the busy traders of Phenicia, without attempting, after the first failure, to dispossess them. No retreat could have promised more safe retirement, but Jesus was now too universally known to remain anywhere undiscovered, for numbers had come to Galilee, even from these very districts, to see and hear Him.

His mission, during His life, had been repeatedly defined by Himself, as only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. That He felt no narrow exclusiveness had been already shown by the incidents of His journey through Samaria, and by the prophetic joy with which He had predicted the entrance of many from the heathen world into His new Society. Even His sympathy with publicans and sinners, and with the outcast sunken multitude, whose ignorance of Rabbinical precepts was held to mark them as accursed of God, had, in fact, been as distinct protests against Pharisaic bigotry as He could have made even by the formal recognition of heathens as citizens of His new Society. And had He not proclaimed the supreme truth that God was the Great Father of all mankind, and that the human race round the world were brethren in His great household? But pity for His own nation—the Israel of the Old Covenant—forbade His going forth, for the time, to all races, with the open invitation to join the new Theocracy. It would at once have sealed the fate of His people, for what was offered to the heathen would, from that very fact, have been instantly rejected by the fanatical Jew.

It was vain for Him to seek rest. A woman of the country, by language a Greek, by nationality a Canaanite, and by residence a Syro-Phenician—for Phenicia was attached to the Roman province of Syria—perhaps a heathen, but, in any case, of an humble religious heart, heard that He was in the neighbourhood. His fame had long before spread so widely, that the wondrous cures He had performed were everywhere known. Among others, this woman had heard of them, and maternal love was quick to turn them to its own unselfish account. She had a daughter "grievously vexed with a devil," and at once came over the border to implore Jesus to have mercy on her child. The half belief that He was the Messiah had spread even to Tyre, and was accepted in her poor unenlightened way by the supplicant. He was abroad with the Twelve when she found Him, and forthwith entreated Him—"Lord, son of David, have mercy on me." She had made her child's trouble her own. Such an incident, at a time when He sought to remain unknown, must have been very disturbing, for it might put His enemies on His track. From whatever cause, He took no notice of her prayers. But she would not be denied, and persistently followed Him with her wailing petitions, as He went along, till the Twelve, filled with harsh Jewish prejudice, and mis-

taking the reason of their Master's silence, grew indignant at her pertinacity, and begged Him to send her away and stop her crying after them. That a foreigner, and, above all, a Canaanite, accursed of God, should share His mercies, was, as yet, far too liberal a conception for them. Did not the Rabbis teach that the race built their houses in the name of their idols, so that evil spirits came and dwelt in them? and was not Beelzebub, the Prince of the Devils, their chief god? The answer of Jesus seemed to favour this bitter exclusiveness—"He was not sent except to the lost sheep of the House of Israel!" They little knew that His help was kept back only in pity for His own nation, whom mercy to abhorred unclean Canaanites would embitter against Him to their own destruction. It was vain, however, to try to weary out a mother's love. Following Him into the house, though He would fain have remained unknown, she cast herself at His feet and renewed her prayer. To the Twelve she was only a "dog," as the Jews regarded all heathen. Veiling the tenderness of His heart in affected roughness of speech, softened, doubtless, by the trembling sympathy of His voice and His gentle looks, He told her that the children—Israel, the sons of God—must first be fed before others could be noticed. "It is not right," said He, "to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs." Then, as now, the traveller, entering or leaving a town or village, had only too much reason to notice the troops of lean, sharp-nosed masterless dogs, which filled the air with their cries as he passed, and no one could sit at a meal without the chance of some of them coming in at the ever-open door to pick up the fragments, always to be found where only the fingers were used at table.

With a woman's quickness, and a mother's invincible love, deepened by irrepressible trust in Him whose face and tones so contradicted His words, even this seeming harshness was turned to a resistless appeal. "Yes, Lord," said she, "it is true: still the dogs are allowed to eat the fragments that fall from the children's table." She had conquered. "O woman," said Jesus, "great is thy faith; be it unto thee as thou wilt." His word was enough, and going her way she found, on reaching her house, that her daughter, no longer raving, was perfectly cured, and lay calmly in bed, once more herself. The Twelve had learned, at last, that even heathen "dogs" were not to be sent, unheard, away.

How long Jesus stayed in these parts is unknown. It would seem as if this incident had forced Him to leave sooner than He had proposed. He did not, however, return at once to Capernaum, but set out north-eastwards, through the territory of Sidon, to the country east of Jordan. The Roman road which ran over the richly wooded hills, almost straight eastward, from Tyre to Cæsarea Philippi, was too far to the south. He must have taken the caravan road, which still runs from Sidon on the south side of the mountain stream Bostrenus, climbing the spurs of Lebanon, with their woods and noble mountain

scenery, till it crosses the range amidst peaks six thousand feet high, at the natural rock-bridge over the deep, rushing Leontes. Turning, now, down the valley of the Upper Jordan, under the shadow of the Hermon range, rising 9,500 feet high in their highest peak, He, ere-long, at Cæsarea Philippi, reached the open country, with a wide view of the broad reedy marshes of Ulatha and Merom, the hills of Galilee, and the wide uplands of Gaulonitis. How long He spent on the journey is not told. Perhaps He stopped by the way, for Lebanon was full then, as now, of villages; perhaps He only passed through them on His way. His final purpose by this wide circuit, was to reach His old haunts without passing through Galilee, and this brought Him, apparently for the first time, to the wide territory of the ten allied free cities—the Decapolis.

These cities were simply places which the Jews had not succeeded in re-conquering, after their return from Babylon. They had thus remained in the hands of the heathen, though in Palestine; had preserved distinct municipal government, and had joined in a political alliance, offensive and defensive. To the Jews they were a continual offence, and they were the first to suffer from the frenzied fanaticism of the nation when it rose in its last great revolt. Most of them, full of busy life, and adorned with splendid temples, baths, theatres, and public buildings, when Jesus passed through them, were destined, before another generation, to perish amidst fire and sword.

Even here the fame of the great Teacher attracted multitudes of Jews settled all over the half-foreign district, especially in its towns and cities, and revived for a time the cheering scenes of the past. The cripple, the blind, the dumb, the deformed, and many others, variously afflicted, were either brought to Him, or came; till He was once more forced, as of old, to retreat to the hills, in the vain effort to gain quiet. The popular excitement, however, made *rest* impossible. They sought and found Him wherever He might be, and enjoyed not only the benefits of His supernatural power, but the richer blessings of His teaching. Only one incident is given in detail. A man had been brought to Him who was deaf, and could only stammer inarticulately; and He was besought to heal him. From what motive is not told, He varied His usual course. Taking him aside from the multitude, perhaps to have more freedom, perhaps to avoid their too great excitement and its possibly hurtful political consequences, He put His fingers into the man's ears, and touched his tongue with a finger moistened on His own lips. It may be that these simple forms were intended to waken faith in one who could hear no words, for, without the fitting spirit, the miracle would not have been wrought. Looking up to heaven, as if to lift the thoughts of the unfortunate man to the Eternal Father, whose power alone could heal him, Jesus then, at last, uttered the single word of the popular dialect—"Ephphatha"—"Be opened"—and he was perfectly cured. An injunction to keep the miracle private was of no avail: the whole

country was presently filled with reports of it, and of other similar wonders.

The vast concourse attracted by such scenes may be imagined; for in the East especially, it is easy for the population, with their simple wants, and the mildness of the sky, which in the warm months invites sleeping in the open air by night, to camp out as they think fit. But, as often happens, even in our own day, with the Easter pilgrims at Jerusalem, many found their provisions run short, and as in these strange and motley crowds numbers of tendie of want, many of those following Jesus might have sunk by the way but for His thoughtful care, for numbers had come far. Once more the crowds were caused to sit on the ground, and were fed from the scanty provision found on the spot, which was no more than seven of the round loaves of the country, and a few small dried fishes from the Lake of Galilee. Four thousand men, besides women and children, were supplied from this scanty store, and seven baskets of fragments, afterwards gathered, attested that they had suffered no stint.

Leaving the eastern side of the Lake, to which His wanderings had led Him, Jesus now, once more, crossed to the neighbourhood of Magdala, at the lower end of the Plain of Gennesareth, and close to Capernaum. He had hardly reappeared before His enemies were once more in motion. The Pharisees had already stifled their dislike of the Herodians, and had formed an alliance with them, that they might the more easily crush Him. It marked the growing malignity of feeling that a class fanatically proud of their ceremonial and moral purity—a class from whose midst had sprung the Zealots for the Law, who abhorred all rule except that of a restored theocracy—should have banded themselves with a party of moral indifferentists, partial to monarchy, and guilty of flattering even the hated family of Herod. But a still more ominous sign of increasing danger showed itself in even Sadducees joining the Pharisees to make new attempts to compromise Jesus with the authorities.

The Sadducees, few, but haughty and powerful, held the highest posts in the Jewish state, and represented the Law. They were of the priestly caste, and held the chief offices in the hierarchy. Their name was perhaps derived from the famous ancient family of Zadok, of whom Ezekiel speaks as having the charge of the altar, and as, alone, of the sons of Levi, appointed to come before the Eternal, to serve Him. Joshua, the son of Jozedek, the comrade of Zerubbabel, was of this House, so that, after the Return, as before it, it seems to have been the foremost among the priestly families. In any case, the Sadducees of the times of Josephus and the Apostles not only held the highest Temple offices, but represented the purest Jewish blood.

But this priestly aristocracy were by no means the most zealous for the sanctuary from which they drew their honours and wealth. They counted in their ancestry not only high priests like Joshua and Simon

the Just, but traitors to their country like Manasseh, Menelaus, and the younger Onias. Already, in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, they had given occasion for the charge that the highest officials had been foremost in breaking the theocratic laws, and had even sought to turn parts of the Temple into a splendid family mansion. They had coquetted and debased their offices to win favour with the Ptolemies and the Syrian kings; they had held back, in half Greek irreligiousness, from taking a vigorous part in the glorious Maccabæan struggle, and now truckled to heathen procurators, or with a half heathen king, to preserve their honours and vested interests. To please Herod, they had admitted Simon Boëthus, the Alexandrian, the father of the king's young wife, to the high priesthood, from which a strict Jew, Jesus the son of Phabi, had been expelled to make room for him. They had even shown frank and hearty submission and loyalty to Rome.

The nation, with its chosen religious leaders, the Pharisees—the representatives of the "Saints" who had conquered in the great war of religious independence—never forgot the faint-heartedness and treachery of the priestly nobility in that magnificent struggle. Their descent might secure its members hereditary possession of the dignified offices of the Church, and there might still be a charm in their historical names; but they were regarded with open distrust and dislike by the nation and the Pharisees alike, and had to make many concessions to Pharisaic rules to protect themselves from actual violence.

The strict fanatical heads of the Synagogue and leaders of the people, and the cold and polished Temple aristocracy, were thus bitterly opposed, and it added to the keenest of the dislike that the dreams by the Rabbinical, or Pharisaic party, of a restored theocracy, could only be realized through the existing organization of the priesthood, of which the indifferent Sadducees had the control.

Theological hatred, the bitterest of all passions, added additional intensity to this political opposition. The Sadducees had no inclination to be taught their duty by the Rabbis of village synagogues, and rejected the whole body of Pharisaic tradition and jurisprudence, taking for their only authority the written law of Moses, though to this were generally added some traditions of their own. Holding the highest offices of the theocracy, and the members of families which had officiated in the Temple of Solomon itself, they disdained to be taught what was lawful in Israel, or to accept the hair-splitting refinements of the democratic and puritan Pharisees. To the constantly increasing decisions and requirements of the Rabbis, they stolidly opposed the venerable letter of the ancient Law. That their creed was cold and rationalistic, compared to that of the Rabbis, was, perhaps, the result of this attitude, but was not its cause. The instinctive conservatism of "the first in rank," inevitably took its stand on the original documents of the Law in opposition to the

heated exaggerations of the plebeian schoolmen. Both sides vaunted their orthodoxy. The Sadducees were as deeply committed to support the theocracy as their popular rivals, for it was the basis of their dignities, their wealth, and even their existence. Fierce controversies, often culminating in bloodshed, marked the devotion of both alike to their opinions, and these opinions themselves illustrated the position of the two parties. The Sadducees uniformly fell back on the letter of the Law, the prescriptive rights of the Temple, and the glory of the priesthood; the Pharisees, on the other hand, took their stand on the authority of the Rabbinical traditions, the value of sacred acts apart from the interposition of the priest, and advocated popular interests generally.

The contrast between the spirit of the two parties showed itself prominently in the harsh tenacity with which the Temple aristocracy held to the letter of the Mosaic Law in its penalties, as opposed to the milder spirit in which the Pharisees interpreted them, in accordance with the spirit of the times. The Pharisees, for example, explained the Mosaic demand—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth—metaphorically, and allowed recompense to be made in money, but the Sadducees required exact compliance. The Sadducees required that the widow should literally spit in the face of the brother-in-law who refused her the levirate marriage rights, but it was enough for the Pharisees that she spat on the ground before him. The Pharisees permitted the carcass of a beast that had died to be used for any other purpose than food, to save loss to the owner, but the Sadducees denounced the penalties of uncleanness on so lax a practice. They sternly required that a false witness be put to death, according to the letter of the Law, even if his testimony had done the accused no injury, and many did not even shrink from carrying out the reasoning of the Rabbis, that, as two witnesses were always required to condemn the accused, both witnesses should always be executed when any perjury had been committed in the case.

This blind insistance on the letter of laws which ages had made obsolete, fixed on the Sadducees the name of "The Condemning Judges," and Josephus testifies that they were more ruthless in their judicial decisions than any other Jews. The Pharisees, on the other hand, had for their axiom the saying of Joshua Ben Perachia—"Judge everything on the presumption of innocence;" or that of Hillel—"Put yourself in your neighbour's place before you judge him." Hence, a prisoner blessed himself when he saw opposite him, on his judges, the broad phylactery of the Pharisee, and not the white robe of the priestly Sadducee. Both our Lord and St. Paul had the multitude stirred up against them by the Pharisees, but they were condemned by Sadducee judges, and it was Sadducee judges who murdered St. James.

This relentless ferocity of priestly houses, who rested on the favour of the rich and titled few, was dictated only by the class interests of

the Temple nobility, whose claims and privileges could not be justified except by the blind maintenance of things as they were. Unchanging conservatism was their only safety; the least innovation seemed an omen of revolution.

But there were even deeper grounds of dislike and opposition. The Pharisees, as the hereditary representatives of puritans who had delivered the nation in the great struggle against Syria, looked forward with touching though fanatical yearning, to the realization of the prophecies of Daniel, which, as they understood them, promised that Israel, under the Messiah, and with it, themselves, should be raised "to dominion, and glory, and a kingdom; that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him, and that His kingdom should be everlasting." They believed that this national triumph would be inaugurated so soon as Israel, on its part, carried out to the full the requirements of the ceremonial laws, as expounded in their traditions. It was a matter of formal covenant, in which the truth and righteousness—that is, the justice, of Jehovah were involved. The morals they demanded might be only mechanical, and their observances slavery to rites and ceremonies, but they believed that if they fulfilled their part, God must needs fulfil His, and they strove hard to make the nation, like themselves, "blameless," touching this righteousness; that they might claim divine interposition as a right. The zeal of the Pharisee for the Law was, thus, a mere hired service, with all the restlessness, exaggeration, emulation, and moral impurity, inseparable from a mercenary spirit.

To this dream of the future, the Sadducees opposed a stolid and contemptuous indifference. Enjoying the honours and good things of the world, they had no taste for a revolution which should introduce, they knew not what, in the place of a state of things with which they were quite contented. Their fathers had had no such ideas, and the sons ridiculed them. They not only laughed aside the Pharisaic idea of righteousness, as identified with a life of minute and endless observance, but fell back on the Mosaic Law, and mocked at the Messianic hope from which the zeal of their rivals had sprung. "The Sadducees," says Josephus, "believe that the soul dies with the body, and recognize no authority but that of the Law. Good was to be done for its own sake, not for reward in the Messianic kingdom, or at the resurrection of the dead." "The Sadducees," says Rabbi Nathan, "use, daily, vessels of gold and silver, not for pride, but because the Pharisees torment themselves in this life, though they will have nothing in the next." As to the world to come, they left it doubtful, maintaining, if the words in the Talmud be not an interpolation, in opposition to the Pharisees, that it could not be proved from the Books of Moses. They even went the length of inventing difficulties which they supposed involved in the resurrection of the dead. "They believe neither in the resurrection, nor in angel, nor spirit, but the Pharisees confess both," says St. Luke.

To all this was added the embitterment of opposite views on the great subject of human freedom and divine foreknowledge. Like all puritans, the Pharisees exalted the latter though they did not deny the former. They had a profound belief in Providence, understanding by it that they themselves were the favourites of Jehovah, and could count on His taking their side. "The Sadducees," says Josephus, "maintain that there is no such thing as predestination, and deny that human affairs are regulated by it, maintaining that our destiny rests with ourselves: that we are the cause of our own good fortune, and bring evil on us by our own folly. The Sadducee was, in fact, a mere man of the world, believing only in the present: the Pharisee, a mystic, to whom the future and the supernatural were all.

The nation zealously supported the Pharisees. The spirit of the age was against the Sadducees. The multitude disliked to hear that what the Maccabæans had defended with their blood was uncanonical. They yielded cheerfully to the heavy yoke of the Pharisaic Rabbis, for, the more burdensome the duties required, the greater the future reward for performance. The Pharisees, moreover, were part of the people, mingled habitually with them as their spiritual guides, and were the examples of exact obedience to their own precepts. Their Messianic dreams were of national glory, and thus the crowd saw in them the representatives of their own fondest aspirations. The Sadducees—isolated, haughty, harsh, and unnational—were hated: their rivals honoured and followed. The extravagances and the hypocrisy of some might be ridiculed, but they were the accepted popular leaders.

Indeed, apart from all other considerations, the fact that the Sadducees supported zealously every government in turn, was enough to set the people against them. Instead of this, the Pharisees shared and fostered the patriotic and religious abhorrence of the Roman supremacy, and were sworn enemies of the hated Herodian family. The result was that, in the words of Josephus, "the Pharisees had such an influence with the people, that nothing could be done about divine worship, prayers, or sacrifices, except according to their wishes and rules, for the community believed they sought only the loftiest and worthiest aims alike in word and deed. The Sadducees were few in number; and though they belonged to the highest ranks, had so little influence, that when elected to office, they were forced to comply with the ritual of the Pharisees from fear of the people."

There were, doubtless, many priests who were not Sadducees—men serving God humbly; devoted to their sacred duties, and living in full sympathy of thought and life with the Pharisees. In the disputes with Jesus, we may be sure that many such Pharisaic priests; the great company, perhaps, who, within a short time after His death, became "obedient to the Faith," took no part in the fierce malignity of their brethren. But, now, for the first time, the Sadducees—haughty clerical aristocrats of the Temple—joined with the

hated vulgar Pharisee of the Synagogue to accomplish the destruction of the new Teacher. It was the most ominous sign of the beginning of the end that had yet appeared.

Eager for a fresh dispute, the strange allies, very likely fresh from Jerusalem, no sooner found that He had returned, than they sallied forth to open a discussion. "You claim," said they, "to be a teacher come from God, and have given many 'signs' that you are so in the miracles you have performed. But all these signs have been untrustworthy, for we know that the earth and even the air are filled with demons. It is quite possible that the prince of the devils, to deceive men into supporting your claims, may have given you power for a time over these demons, and thus all that you have done may be only a dark plot to undo us. The Egyptian magicians did miracles, and our fathers did not believe even Moses for the common wonders he did, for they might have been wrought only by magic and incantations. A sign from heaven, however, is different. It is beyond the power of devils: 'they can neither shine like the sun, nor give light like the moon, nor give rain unto men.' Our Rabbis tell us that when the King-Messias comes, and the great war between Gog and Magog begins, signs from heaven will appear. We are not to expect Him till a rainbow has spanned the world and filled it with light. Give us bread from heaven, as Moses did, or signs in the sun and moon like Joshua, or call down thunder and hail like Samuel, or fire and rain like Elijah, or make the sun turn back like Isaiah, or let us hear the Bath Kol which came to Simon the Just—that we may believe you."

But Jesus knew the men with whom He had to do, and would hold no communication with them beyond the shortest. The tempter had long before urged Him to make a vain display of His supernatural power in support of His claims, but as it was monstrous that miracles should be thrown away on the Prince of Darkness, or wrought at his will, it was no less so to work them at the bidding of men filled with his spirit. The worth of proof depends on the openness to conviction. He had already said that to cast pearls before wild swine, was only to invite them to turn and rend you. No "sign" could avail where there was no sympathy. The truth He came to proclaim appealed to the heart, and must be its own evidence, winning its way by its own divine beauty into humble and ready breasts. External proofs could only establish external facts.

With biting irony He turned on them in a few brief incisive sentences. "How is it that ye, who are so skilled in the signs of the heavens, are so dull to read those around you? You watch the sky, and talk of signs in it. In the evening you say, 'Fair weather, for the sky is red;' and in the morning, 'Foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowering.' When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say, 'there comes a shower;' when you see a south wind blowing, you say, 'There will be heat.' You pretend to tell, by the way the smoke blows on the last evening of the Feast of Tabernacles, what

weather there will be for the year. If it turn northward, you say there will be much rain, and the poor will rejoice; if it turn south, you say the rich will rejoice and the poor mourn, for there will be little rain; if it turn eastward, all rejoice; if westward, all mourn. If God have been so gracious to men as to give signs of fair weather, of wind, and of rain, how much more must He have given signs of the near approach of the Messiah? You are diligent to excess in studying the sky, but you ask signs of my being the Messiah as if none had been given, when many unmistakable ones invite you in your own Scriptures, in the events of the day, the preaching of John, and in my own miracles, teaching, and life. An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign of the approach of the kingdom of God to suit it, while it is blind to the signs around, that the Messiah must come, if the nation is not to perish. I will give you no sign but that of the prophet Jonah, for as the warning of his words, was the only one given to the Ninevites, my preaching will be the only sign given to you. It is its own evidence. Apart from my miracles; my life, and the divine and heavenly truth I preach, are sufficient proof that I am sent by God. Hereafter, indeed, Jonah will become a sign in another sense, for as he was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so I, when put to death, shall be the same time in the grave."

So saying, He left them. It was clearly unsafe to stay in their neighbourhood. Henceforth He could only lead a fugitive outlawed life, and with a deep sigh at the hopelessness of winning over men blinded by prejuice, and hardened in heart, He entered the boat once more, and crossed the Lake to the lonely and secure eastern side.

CHAPTER XLVI.

IN FLIGHT ONCE MORE.

The renewed attempt to involve Jesus in a damaging dispute had failed. He had not made an ostentatious display of supernatural power at the bidding of His enemies, but had turned sharply on them, and had left them discomfited before the multitude. They had hoped to have depreciated Him as a mere unauthorized intruder into the office of Rabbi, and to have had an easy triumph, but His modest, yet dignified and keen retort had put them to shame. Their bitterness against one, now hated and feared more than ever, was so much the greater.

His departure that autumn evening might well have saddened His heart. It was His final rejection on the very spot where He had laboured most, and He was leaving it, to return, indeed, for a passing visit, but never to appear again publicly, or to teach, or work miracles. As the boat swept out into the Lake, and the whole scene opened before Him—the white beach, the green plain, the wooded hills

behind, the white houses reflected in the water, and over them the stately synagogue, in which He had taught so often, and done such mighty acts,—it was no wonder that He sighed deeply in spirit, borne down by the thought of the darkened mind, the perverted conscience, and the stony heart that had rejected the things of their peace.

As He sat in the boat amidst His disciples He was still full of such thoughts. They had heard His words to His enemies, but they did not seem to have realized all the danger implied in the incident. Many had been led away from Him by the deceitful slanders, or specious arguments of the hierarchical party, and it was well that they should be put on their guard.

"Take heed, beware," said He solemnly, "of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and of the party of Herod." It so happened, however, that in their hurried flight, having had no time to lay in provisions, there was only one loaf in the boat, and with the childishness of uneducated minds, they at once fancied He referred to their having come without bread. At the well of Samaria they had thought He referred to common food when He spoke of the meat of the soul; they had been as dull in catching the metaphor of His flesh being the bread of life, and hereafter they were to think only of natural rest when He spoke of the dead Lazarus as sleeping. Reflection, like continuity of thought, comes only with mental training. The uncultured mind, whether old or young, learns slowly. They might have remembered from the twice repeated miraculous feelings of the multitude, that it was indifferent how little they had with them when their Master was in their midst, but it needs a thoughtfulness and depth beyond that of average fishermen and peasants, such as they were, to reason and reflect. "He tells us," they whispered, "that if we buy bread from a Pharisee or a Sadducee, the bread would defile us, as it would if we bought it from a Samaritan." So rude was the spiritual material from which Jesus had to create the founders of Christianity!

"O ye of little faith," interrupted He, "why do ye reason among yourselves because ye have no loaves? Are your hearts hardened that you cannot understand? Have you forgotten when I broke the five loaves among the five thousand, and the seven among the four thousand, how many baskets and wallets full of fragments ye took up? How could you think you would ever want after that, whether we had bread with us or not? Do you not see that when I spoke of loaves I was thinking not of loaves, but of instruction? Beware of the teaching of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians, about me or about religion. They would gladly fill your minds with slanders and misleading fancies; draw you away from me; and corrupt your hearts by their superstition, and religious acting, and self-righteous pride, or by their worldliness and unbelief."

The course of the boat was directed to the head of the Lake, to Bethsaida, newly renamed Julias by the tetrarch Philip, in honour of

the daughter of Augustus, his patron. The old name of the village had not yet been lost, however. It was on the route to the district to which Jesus was hurrying, and might well have detained Him as a resting place, under other circumstances. Lying on the green hill above the plain of Batiha—the scene of the miraculous feeding—it overlooked, at a short distance, the entrance of the Jordan into the Lake. To the west stretched the wide tract of black basalt, rough and barren, reaching from the marshes of Jordan, dotted with buffaloes luxuriating in the mire, to Chorazin and Capernaum. To the south rose the bare table-land on the east of the Lake, and the town itself, boasting the splendid tomb just built by Philip, for his own use, was not wanting in beauty. But Jesus had no leisure to stay, nor was there an inducement in any kindly bearing of the population towards Him. He had often taught in their streets and synagogue, and had lived in their houses, and done many mighty works before them, yet, like the people of Chorazin and Capernaum, they had listened to their Rabbis rather than to Him, and had refused to repent. There still, however, were some who had better thoughts, and these, seeing Him enter the town, hurriedly brought a blind man, and besought Him to touch him. Even in a place that would not hear Him His tender heart could not withhold its pity. It would have attracted notice when He most sought to avoid it, had He healed the sufferer in the public street, and, therefore, taking him by the hand, He led him into the fields outside. He might have wrought the cure by a word, but He chose to use the same simple form as in the case of the dumb man in the Decapolis. Touching the blind eyes with His moistened finger, perhaps to arrest the wandering thoughts and predispose him to trust in the Healer, He asked the blind man "if he saw aught?" The supernatural power of the touch had had due effect. With upturned eyes, the hitherto blind could see indistinctly. Men moved before him, in undefined haze, like trees. The partial cure must have strengthened his faith, and thus prepared him for perfect restoration. Another touch, and he could see clearly, far and near. "Go to your home," said Jesus, "without returning to the town, and tell no one about it." The less publicity given to His acts or words, the safer for Christ.

The retreat to which Jesus was making was the town of Cæsarea Philippi. It lay on the north-east of the reedy and marshy plain of El Huleh. It was close to Dan, the extreme north of the bounds of ancient Israel, as Beersheba was the extreme south. It was almost on a line with Tyre, and thus, far out of the reach of the Rabbis and High Priests. A town, Baal-Gad—named from the Canaanite god of fortune—had occupied the site from immemorial antiquity, but Philip had rebuilt it splendidly, three years before Christ's birth, and, in accordance with the prevailing flattery of the Emperor, had called it Cæsarea, in honour of Augustus. It had been the pleasure of his peaceful reign to adorn it with altars, votive images, and statues, and

his own name had been added by the people, to distinguish it from the Cæsarea on the sea-coast. Herod the Great, Philip's father, had already, nineteen years before Christ, in grateful acknowledgment of the gift of the districts of Panias and Ulatha, adorned the spot with a grand temple of white marble, in heathen flattery of the Emperor, deified, thus, while still alive, by the king of the Jews. The worship of the shepherd god Pan, to whom a cave out of which burst the waters of the Jordan, was sacred, had given its second name—Panias—now, Banias—to the place. It was one of the loveliest spots in the Holy Land, built on a terrace of rock, part of the range of Hermon, which rose behind it seven or eight thousand feet. Countless streams murmured down the slopes, amidst a unique richness and variety of flower, and shrub, and tree. The chief source of the Jordan, still bursts in a full silver-clear stream from a bottomless depth of water, in the old cave of Pan, at the foot of the mountain, from beneath a high perpendicular wall of rock, adorned with niches once filled with marble Naiads of the stream and Satyrs of the woods; and with countless votive tablets; but now strewn round with the ruins of the shepherd god's ancient temple. Thick woods still shade the channel of the young river. Oaks and olive groves alternate with pastures and fields of grain, and high over all rises the old castle of Banias, perhaps the "Tower of Lebanon that looketh towards Damascus," of the song of Solomon.

To this scene Jesus had now come, and might have found in the charms of nature a balm for His tired and stricken heart, had He been free to think of such outward charms. From the hill on which the town stood—one of the lower spurs of Hermon—the view ranged over all northern Palestine, from the plains of Phenicia, to the hills of Samaria. In the north-west rose the dark gigantic mountain forms of Lebanon; to the south stretched out the rich table-land of the Hauran. From Hermon, not from Zion, or the Mount of Olives, one beholds "the good land, the land of brooks, of waters, of fountains, of depths that spring out of the valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey." Far and near the surpassingly fruitful landscape was watered by sparkling brooks flowing into the main stream of Jordan, here only twenty steps broad. So far back as the days of the Judges, the children of Dan, wandering hither from the south, had found it to want nothing that earth could give. Wheat fields alternated with fields of barley, maize, sesame, and rice, olive orchards, meadows, and flowery pastures, the delight of countless bees; and the slopes were covered with woods, vocal with the songs of birds.

But even Jesus had few thoughts, at such a time, for such natural charms. He was a fugitive and outlaw, rejected by the nation He had come to save; safe only because He was outside the bounds of Israel, in a heathen region. It was clear that His public work was

virtually over, for even in Galilee, where multitudes had followed Him, His popularity had waned under the calumnies of the Rabbis, and His steady refusal to sanction the popular conception of the Messiah. From the moment they had seen that He sought only spiritual aims, and was not a second Judas the Galilæan, they had gone back to their own teachers, who favoured the national views, and instead of demanding repentance and a new life, recognized them as the favourites of Jehovah, and the predestined heirs of the Messiah's Kingdom. The death of the Baptist foretold His own fate. The crisis of His life had come. If He had won few true followers, He had securely founded the New Kingdom of God. It might indeed, as yet, be but a seed in the great field of the world, or a speck of leaven in the vast mass of humanity; but the seed would multiply itself to the ends of the earth, and the leaven would slowly but surely spread, age after age, through the whole race of man. His own death would now no longer be fatal to the New Society; the germ of its fullest development would survive in the little circle of the Twelve, and of the few other faithful souls who had received Him.

But it was necessary that the band to whom the spread of His Kingdom after His death would be entrusted should be confirmed in their faith, and enlightened by explicit disclosures of His relations to themselves and to it. There was much, even in their humble and honest hearts, that needed correction and elevation. They were Jews, trained in the theology of His enemies, and still unconsciously influenced by it to a great extent.

Jesus had utterly different conceptions of His kingdom from theirs, and, therefore, had not, as yet, claimed the title of Messiah in any formal way, even in the circle of the Twelve, though He had never hesitated to accept homage, as such, when it was offered. Once, to the Samaritan woman, and once, by silent assent, to the Twelve, He had assumed the awful dignity, and the whole spirit of His teaching and life implied His claim to it. But, even to the Twelve, there had been a reticence and caution, that He might not anticipate the development of their religious nature, and disclose a mystery they were, as yet, unable to receive. Before the people at large He had never assumed the Messiahship, for, with their gross political ideas, to have done so would have been to bring Himself into collision with the State at once. He had even, as far as possible, kept His supernatural work in the background, shunning publicity as a worker of miracles, and leaving the progress of His kingdom rather to the divine beauty of His teaching and life. To have put Himself forward, from the first, as the Messiah, would have closed at once all avenues of influence, for He was in every way the very opposite of the national ideal. They expected their race to be exalted to supreme honour and power. He sought to humble them to the lowliest contrition. They expected that, under the Messiah, the

heathen would bow before Israel; He proclaimed that the heathen were to have equal rank and rights with "the people of God." They expected that the traditions of the Rabbis, with their infinite observances, were to be made the law for all countries and ages; He announced their utter abrogation, and the establishment of a new covenant of filial liberty with men at large, in place of the old covenant with a single people. They expected a sudden and violent political convulsion, heralded by a disturbance of the order of nature by unprecedented signs and wonders in the heavens, and on earth, and of the history of nations. He taught that the Messianic kingdom would be brought about only by the silent might of words, and of the Spirit of God, renewing all natural and moral relations of men, but only by a slow and well-nigh imperceptible advance. Not only the nation, but even the Twelve, had utterly to unlearn the fixed ideas of the past, before a spiritual Messiahship could be welcome to them. How difficult that was, is shown by the request of Salome, the mother of James and John, after the disciples had formally acknowledged their Leader as the Messiah, that her two sons should sit in the high places of honour, on the right and left of the Messianic throne.

In the conscious divinity of His nature, Jesus had never yet asked the Twelve any question respecting Himself, but it was necessary, now that the end was approaching, that they should know Him in His true dignity. He must reveal Himself definitely as the Messiah, and be formally accepted as such. To have confined Himself, like John, to the announcement of the kingdom of God as at hand, would have left that kingdom incomplete, and have created expectations of the future advent of some other as its Head. Without a personal centre round which to gather, the work of His life would have faded away with His death. He Himself, in the deathless beauty of His life, and the infinite attractiveness of His self-sacrificing death, must necessarily be the abiding soul of the new Society through all ages, for its fundamental principle, from the first, had been personal love towards Him. His words, His whole life, His voluntary humiliation; the transcendent self-restraint and self-denial which had used unlimited supernatural power only for others; and had submitted to poverty, obscurity, and opposition, ere long to culminate in the endurance of a violent death for the good of mankind, raised Him to a divine and perfect ideal of love and goodness, which, of itself, proclaimed Him the King—that is, the Messiah—in the new kingdom He had founded. "The love of Christ" was to be the watchword of His followers in all ages: the sentiment that would nerve them to endure triumphantly the bitterest persecutions, and even death: that would constrain them to life-long devotion to His cause; in obedience to His commands, and in imitation of His example. The words of a future disciple, St. Paul, would be only the utterance of all others worthy the name, in every age. "The love of Christ con-

straineth us." With St. John, they would "love Him because He first loved us." He had founded a kingdom, for the first and only time in history, on personal love to the founder, and, as such, He must definitely reveal Himself in His spiritual relation to it as, henceforth, its recognized Messiah-King.

A crisis so momentous in the development of His great work must have profoundly affected a nature, sensitive and holy, like His. His whole life was an unbroken communion with His Father in Heaven, but there were moments when this passion of the soul appeared to grow more intense. His human weakness, though unstained by evil, was fain to strengthen itself by the near presence of His Father above, with whom every beat of His thoughts moved in undisturbed and awful harmony. In all His temptations, Ye had ever betaken Himself to prayer, and, now, when Israel had rejected Him, and there rose before Him only the vision of the Cross; when His kingdom, more clearly than ever, was to go forth to conquer the world only from the gates of His opened grave; when He had, therefore, while yet with them, to take His seat among those in whom that kingdom had its first subjects.—as its Messiah-King—the moment was one of unspeakable sublimity.

He had, thus, been absorbed in thought and separated in fervent prayer, as they passed from town to town on His northward journey, until at last they had reached the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. There, He once more went aside, in some lonely spot among the rich wooded valleys, for solitary prayer. Before He returned to the Twelve, He had determined to delay no longer a full self-revelation: to throw aside the veil, and openly assume the Messiahship which had long been silently ascribed to Him in His little circle, and as silently accepted, without a formal and definite assumption.

"Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" sufficed to introduce the momentous topic. The answer showed how little He had been understood, and how utterly the fixed national idea of a Messiah had darkened the general mind. "Some say with Antipas, the spirit of John the Baptist has entered Thee, and that Thou workest through it, or that Thou art John himself, risen from the dead, and appearing under another name; some that Thou art Elias, who, like Enoch, has never died, but was taken up bodily to heaven, and has now returned in the body as Malachi predicted, to prepare for the Messiah; some that Thou art Jeremiah, come to reveal the Ark and the sacred vessels which he hid in Mount Nebo, and thus inaugurate the approaching reign of the Messiah; or one of the prophets, sent from the other world by God, as a herald of the Coming One." They could not add that any regarded Him as the Messiah. His refusal to appeal to force, and head a political revolution, had caused an almost universal repudiation of the thought.

Jesus expressed neither sorrow nor displeasure at such an utter failure to recognize Him in His true character. He had been the

subject of the keenest interest and discussion, from His felt relation to the Expected One, and this, of itself, promised a rich result, when His followers, after His departure, directed the minds of men to a clearer conception of the Messianic Kingdom. He Himself knew whom He was, and was unaffected by any popular judgment. But He had now to obtain from the lips of the Twelve themselves,—the special witnesses of His life and daily words,—a higher confession, which He knew they only needed a question from Him to utter gladly. "But whom say ye that I am?" Instantly from the lips of Simon Peter, the impulsive, tender, loving, rock-like disciple, came all that the full heart of his Master waited to hear. "Thou, my Master and Lord," said he, doubtless with beaming joy, "Thou art the Christ—Antah Meschicha—the Son of the living God." Thus, in the outskirts of the heathen town dedicated to the deified Augustus, Jesus was proclaimed, with no preparatory circumstance, in the privacy of a small circle of Galilæan fishermen, as the King of the Universal Israel: here, a fugitive whose only earthly crown was to be the one of thorns, He assumed publicly the empire of all the world, as the Messiah of God.

The greatness and significance of this confession of Peter's, made in the name of the Twelve, cannot be exaggerated. It was a striking advance towards realizing the great truth of the Incarnation, and the clear intelligence would one day follow the open and ardent utterance of the heart. Hitherto Jesus had revealed Himself chiefly as the "Son of Man," and "the Son of God;" but He now received from those who had been constantly with Him, as a faint acknowledgment of the conviction wrought by His life, and words, and mighty works, the formal inauguration as the Messiah-King of a spiritual and deathless empire. Nathanael had anticipated the great confession, indeed, at the opening of His ministry, and the disciples had recognized Him as the Son of God, on that wild night when they found that the form walking on the waves was not the spirit of the storm, but their loving Master, and when the very winds and waves were seen to obey Him. But the time was not then ripe for His definite installation as Messiah, and the incidents passed off. Simon, also, had cheered His troubled soul, when the great secession of the disciples took place at Capernaum, by an anticipation of His confession at Cæsarea Philippi, but He had waived it, as it were, aside. Now, however, He formally accepted what, hitherto, He had silently allowed; for the hour had come.

"Blessed art Thou, Simon Barjona," said He; "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this to you, for you have not learned it from my lowly outward form, and it has come to you from no human teaching; My Father in Heaven has thought you worthy to have it revealed to you." It was, indeed, an amazing utterance. The Twelve had been the daily witnesses of the human simplicity and poverty of His life, His homelessness, His weary wanderings afoot, and all the

circumstances of His constant humiliation, which might have counterbalanced the great memories which their privileged intimacy had afforded, and obscured their spiritual significance. These last months had, moreover, surrounded Him with all the depreciations of a fugitive life. Yet they had broken through the hereditary national prejudice of their race, with whom tradition and absolute uniformity in religious things had an inconceivable power,—they had disregarded the judgment of their spiritual rulers and leaders; risen above the utmost ideas of those around; and had seen, in their lowly rejected Master, the true Lord of the new kingdom of God. Nor is the fact less wonderful that the life and words of Jesus, seen thus closely, should have created such a lofty and holy conception of His spiritual greatness, amidst all the counteractions of outward fact and daily familiarity. In spite of all, He was the Malka Meschicha—the King-Messiah—to those who had known Him best.

The ardent, immovable devotion of Peter, the first to own his Master as Messiah, as he had been first in all other utterances of trust and reverence, won for itself an illustrious tribute from Jesus. The weary, sad heart, that had so much to grieve it, had been filled for the time with a pure and kingly joy at the proof thus given, that, at last, a true and solid beginning had been made. He had, doubtless, long yearned for a time when the Twelve would be advanced enough in spiritual things to let Him disclose His utmost thoughts and ultimate designs, and this time had now come. He had never yet spoken of the future government or organization of the New Kingdom, as a visible communion, and did not propose to lay down any detailed laws even now. He hastened to tell Peter, however, that this society,—His Church or congregation, "called out" from the world at large, would be entrusted, after His decease, to him. As buildings in the country around were founded on a rock, that the floods and storms might not overthrow them, so it would be raised on the rock-like fidelity shown by him in his great confession.

Turning to him, He continued, "I have something to say that concerns thee. Thou art to me, as when I first saw you,—Petros;—the the rock (petra) which I will make the foundation stone, when my Church, in which my followers will be enrolled, is to be built. In its building you will do me the greatest service, like the stone on which all others rest, itself resting on the firm rock beneath—which is Myself. On you and such rock-like souls, it will rise, but on you first; and the gates of death will be powerless against it, for it shall outlive the grave and reach on into eternity. Unopening though the gates of the grave be, they shall open wide to let forth my followers to the resurrection of the just, nor shall the powers of evil be able to overturn the new society thus gathered. I have called you the rock on which I shall raise my Church—I call you also the steward, to whom the charge of it is entrusted. As such I shall give you, after my ascent to heaven, the keys of it, to admit such as you think

worthy, both Jews and heathen, and to shut out those whom you think unfit. I commit to you, moreover, the government and discipline of its membership: whatever you forbid as unbecoming my kingdom, or as unfitting for membership in it, shall be as if forbidden by me, myself, in heaven; and whatever you permit, as not contrary to its welfare, or not excluding from it, shall be as if I, myself, permitted it, from above. It will be left to your decision, which will be recognized before God, what may be forbidden, as a hindrance to entry into my Church on earth, or unworthy of it; and what may be permitted, as not barring from its membership." How Peter exercised this honour in the Apostolic Church was hereafter to be seen, when he rose as spokesman of the eleven in the election of a twelfth: when he spoke for them on the Day of Pentecost, before the multitude, and by his constant mention as chief and foremost of the Apostles. Jesus was almost immediately to extend the same dignity and authority to the whole of the twelve, but Peter had just precedence in recognition of his worth and character. The figments of Roman creation, by which, from this tribute to his love and enthusiasm, a vast structure of priestly arrogance and usurpation has been raised, need no notice in this place.

The New Society was at last formally constituted, and provision made for its government and continuance after its founder's death. Henceforth, He moved in the circle of the Twelve as the recognized Messiah of whom they were the future designated heralds.

But the approaching end of the great drama could not be left untold. Jerusalem was the one spot in which alone the work of Jesus could be completed. Galilee had been only the place of preparation. The Temple and its ministering priests, the Rabbis and the schools, were in the Holy City. David had reigned there, and there must the Messiah be declared, to vindicate the honour of God, and proclaim the new spiritual theocracy in the centre of the religious world. His work in Galilee was virtually over, for though not finished, it was hopelessly paralyzed and checked. He might return, but it would avail nothing against the conspiracy that everywhere faced Him. But in Jerusalem His work was both to begin and to complete. He must go to the Capital, for Galilee was in great measure closed against Him. He had assumed the Messiahship, and He must needs proclaim it openly before His enemies in their stronghold. He knew that only death awaited Him, but that death had been foreseen in the eternal counsels of God as the mysterious atonement for the sins of the world.

It would have been premature to have spread abroad the momentous incident of the ascription and formal acceptance of the title of Messiah. The Twelve must needs know the great truth, but the multitude must, for a time, be left to their own fancies. He was to be preached as a crucified and risen Saviour, not as a Jewish Messiah, and this could not be till the end had come. Nor did the Twelve as

yet understand the divine plan of salvation clearly enough, and the Jews, moreover, might have taken advantage of the preaching for seditious movements. So imperative was temporary secrecy, indeed, that He gave the strictest injunctions that no man should be told what had happened.

The idea of a suffering Messiah was, however, so wholly foreign to all prevailing conceptions, that it was indispensable that the catastrophe at Jerusalem, foreseen by Jesus from the first, but now near at hand, should be made familiar to the Twelve, as part of the all-wise purpose of God in the development of the new spiritual kingdom. It has been a disputed point whether any of the Rabbis of Christ's day had thought of the Messiah as destined to suffer and die. Beyond question some had applied to Him the passages of Isaiah, which speak of the servant of God as wounded for our transgressions, but it is equally certain that the idea had not only found no general acceptance, but was entirely opposed to the feeling of the nation. From this time, therefore, Jesus began systematically to prepare the Twelve for His approaching violent death, returning to the sad topic at every opportunity; that a truth, so disagreeable and so contrary to their life-long ideas, might gradually become familiar to them; and that they might come to feel that it was in accordance with the divine plan of His kingdom. He had spoken of it before, but now threw aside all vagueness, and impressed it on them with the utmost distinctness; doubtless, explaining from their own Scriptures, as He did afterwards to the disciples at Emmaus, how "it was necessary that Christ should suffer these things, and then enter into His glory." To revolutionize fixed belief is never easy, for the will has to be persuaded as well as the understanding. Hitherto, their minds had not been prepared for such a shock, and even yet, as we shall often see, they were very slow to give up their preconceptions, and realize what seemed so contradictory.

It was impossible, however, to mistake the warnings of their Master, however hard it might be to reconcile them with their own ideas. "He must go to Jerusalem," He said, "and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days, rise again." But so far were the Twelve from comprehending such an announcement, that Peter, too impulsive to wait for an opportunity of telling how much it distressed him, could not restrain his feelings. True to his character, he forthwith took Him by the hand, and led Him aside, to remonstrate with Him, and dissuade Him from a journey which would have such results. "God keep this evil far from Thee, my Lord and Master," said he. "You must not let such things happen. They will utterly ruin the prospects of your kingdom, for they match ill with the dignity of the Messiah. If there be any danger such as you fear, why not use your supernatural power to preserve yourself and us. It is not to be endured that you should suffer such indignities." It was the very same temptation as the arch

enemy had set before Him in the wilderness: to employ His divine power for His own advantage, instead of using it, with absolute self-surrender, only to carry out the will of His Father. But, as ever before, it was instantly repelled. His quick, stern answer must have made Peter recoil afraid. "Get thee behind me," said He, "out of my sight, thou tempter; thou art laying a snare for me: thy words shew that in these things thou enterest not into the thoughts and plans of God, but considerest all things only from the ideas of men, with their dreams of ambition and human advantage." Peter still fancied that Jesus would be an earthly monarch, and that the proper course to take, under the circumstances, was to oppose force with force. He had yet to learn that the kingdom of his Master was to be established by suffering and self-denial.

It was a moment unspeakably solemn. Even the few faithful ones, and their very Coryphæus,—their leader and mouthpiece—while hailing Jesus as the Messiah, clung to the old national ideas, and could not reconcile them with His suffering and dying. He had rebuked the temptation which appealed to Him as a man, so strongly, to take the ease and glory which invited Him, and to abandon the path of sorrow and lowliness, which might be the spiritual life of the world, but was His own humiliation and martyrdom. It had been driven away from His stainless soul, like darkness from the sun, but its power in the minds even of the Twelve, was only too clear. The truth, in all its repugnancy, must be forced on them more clearly than ever, that they might no longer continue with Him if it offended them; for He would receive none as His disciples who did not cheerfully embrace a life of self-denial and absolute devotion, even to the sacrifice of life, for His sake; with no prospect whatever of earthly reward. Nor would He even accept any one willing, from a mercenary spirit, to suffer here that He might receive a reward hereafter: for though such a reward was promised to those who were faithful to the end, absolute sincerity was required in His service. It must be the grateful, spontaneous expression of true love and devotion.

Even in such an outlying district as that of Cæsarea Philippi, numbers of the population—for there were many Jews in the region—had gathered to hear and see Him and were near at hand at the moment. The test required of the Twelve was no less imperative for these: the "floor" must be thoroughly "fanned and cleansed" from all self-deception or designed hypocrisy.

Without giving Peter time, therefore, to excuse himself, and leaving him to the shame of his reproof, Jesus called the people and the Twelve round Him, and continued the subject on which He had begun to speak.

"I must needs suffer," said He, "before I enter into my glory, but so must all who would be my followers. If any man propose to be my disciple, he must literally follow me in my path of humiliation and sorrow. Whatever would hinder absolute devotion and self-sac-

rifice must be given up. He must make Me his one aim. All that stands in the way of undivided loyalty to Me—the love of ease, of pleasure, and even of life—must be surrendered. The hopes and prospects which engage other men must be abandoned, and in their stead he must daily take up the sufferings and self-denials which come on him for my sake, and bear them as a man condemned to death bears the cross on which he is to die. I have set, and shall set him the example I require him to follow. Any one who thinks he can be my disciple, and enter into my kingdom hereafter, and yet bear himself so in this evil time as to escape suffering and enjoy life and its comforts, deceives himself. If he seek this life by denying my name, as he must needs do in this age to escape persecution, he will lose life eternal. But he who is willing, for my sake, to sacrifice his natural desire for pleasure and ease, and even to give up life itself, if required, for my name, will receive everlasting life when I come in my kingdom. Hard though this seem, it is the wisest and best thing you can do to comply heartily with it. What has a man in the end if, by denying me for his worldly interests, he gain even the whole world, and lose that life which alone is worthy the name? Unprepared for the eternal life of my kingdom, and without a share in it; with his breath he loses not only all that he has, but himself as well. What gain here will repay him for the loss of the life hereafter?

"I say this on good grounds, and with absolute truth. For, though now only a man like yourselves, I shall one day return in a very different form, with the majesty of my Father in heaven, and accompanied by legions of angels, to recompense every one according to his works. In that day each true disciple will be rewarded according to his loving devotion and self-sacrifice for my sake, and will be received by me, as the Messiah, into my kingdom. But I shall be ashamed of any one, and count him unfit to enter that kingdom, who for love of life and ease, or for fear of man, or from shame of my present lowly estate, or of my cross, has wanted courage and heart to confess me openly, and separate himself, in my name, from this sinful generation. It may be hard for you to think, as you see me standing here before you, that I shall one day come in heavenly majesty; but that you may know how surely it will be so, I shall grant to some of you, now present, a glimpse of this majesty, not after my death, but while I am still with you, that they may see me, the Son of Man, in the glory in which I will come when I return to enter on my kingdom."

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

JESUS had now utterly broken with the past. Hitherto He had been slowly educating the Twelve to right conceptions of Himself and His great work, and in doing so had had to oppose their stubborn prejudice, enlighten their ignorance, illustrate His meaning by significant acts, resist the sophistry and superficial literalism of the Rabbis, and lead the way to a higher spiritual ideal and life by His own daily example and words. They had now been in His society, however, for over two years, and, at last, had risen to a more just estimate of His dignity and of the nature of His work. He was henceforth free from the anxiety which had been inevitable so long as nothing had been definitely accomplished towards the perpetuity of His kingdom; for the confession of Peter, in the name of his brethren, was the assurance that that kingdom would outlive His own death, and spread ever more widely through an unending future. The joy of victory filled His soul, though the cross lay in the immediate future. Henceforth He bore Himself as soon to leave the circle with whom He had dwelt so long; now, preparing them for His humiliation by showing its divine necessity; now, uttering His deepest thoughts on the things of His kingdom; now, kindling their hearts by visions of the joy that would spread over all nations through the Gospel they were to preach. The future alone filled His heart and mind.

His gladness of soul at Peter's confession had, like all human raptures, been tempered by shadow. He had read the hearts of the Twelve, and saw that, though they had approached the truth in their conception of the Messiah, they were still Jews, in linking with it the expectation of an earthly political kingdom, with its ambitions and human satisfactions. They had risen above the difficulties that blinded the nation;—the thought of Nazareth—Galilee—human relationship—lowly position—human wants—rejection by the Rabbis —familiar intercourse with the "unclean" multitude, and much beside, that had been a stumbling block to others; but it was hard for them, in the presence of one who, to outward appearance, was a man like themselves, to realize that He was the only-begotten Son of God, and, like His Father, divine.

The announcement that He was to enter into His glory as Messiah, by suffering shame and death, not only shocked all their preconceptions; they could not understand it, and were sorely discouraged. They needed to be cheered in their despondency, and led gradually to accept the disclosure of His approaching humiliation. His promise that some of them, before their death, should see His kingdom

come with power, was doubtless treasured in their hearts; but they little thought its fulfilment was so near.

Six days passed; or eight, including the first and last days full, doubtless, of sad and grave, as well as joyous, thoughts: sad that their Master spoke of suffering violence, and death: grave that He should not only have dashed all their hopes of a national regeneration, but should have painted their own future in colours so sombre; yet joyous, amidst all, in vague anticipations of the predicted spiritual glory of the New Kingdom, of which they were to be heralds. Little by little they would be sure to catch more of His spirit, from daily intercourse with Him, and learn imperceptibly how the purest joy and the noblest glory come from self-sacrificing love; how, in the highest sense, it is more blessed to give than to receive. We are told nothing of this sacred interval, but may well conjecture how it passed.

The scene of the Transfiguration, like that of nearly all other incidents in the life of our Lord, is not minutely stated. St. Luke, indeed, calls it "The Mountain," but gives it no closer name. It seems, however, certain, that the tradition which from the days of St. Jerome has pointed to Mount Tabor as the locality, is incorrect. The summit of that hill—an irregular platform, embracing a circuit of half an hour's walk, was apparently from the earliest ages fortified, and Josephus mentions, about A.D. 60, that he strengthened the defences of a city built on it. Picturesque, therefore, though the hill looks, as the traveller approaches it over the wide Plain of Esdraelon, it could not have been the spot where Jesus revealed His glory, for it could not offer the seclusion and isolation indicated in the gospels. Nor is there any reason to think that the Twelve and their Master had left the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, for St. Mark expressly mentions that they did not start for Galilee till at least the day after.

It was, doubtless, therefore, on one of the spurs of Hermon, "the lofty mountain," near which He then found Himself, that the Transfiguration took place. Brought up among the hills, such a region; with distant summits, white in spots with snow, even in summer; its pure air; and the solitude of woody slopes and shady valleys, must have breathed an ethereal calm and deep peaceful joy, seldom felt amidst the abodes of men, on the wearied and troubled spirit of our Lord.

Taking the three of His little band most closely in sympathy with Him, and most able to receive the disclosures that might be made to them, He ascended into the hills towards evening, for silent prayer. The favoured friends were Peter—the rock-like—His host at Capernaum from the first; and the two Sons of Thunder, John and James; loved disciples both, but John, the younger, nearest his Master's heart of all the Twelve, as most like Himself in spirit. They had been singled out, already, for similar especial honour, for they only

had entered the death-chamber in the house of Jairus, and they were, hereafter, to be the only witnesses of the awful sorrow of Gethsemane.

Evening fell while Jesus poured out His soul in high communion with His Father, and the three, having finished their nightly devotions, had wrapped themselves in their abbas and lain down on the grass, to sleep till called. Meanwhile their Master continued in prayer, His whole soul filled with the crisis so fast approaching. He had taken the three with Him, to overcome their dread of His death and repugnance to the thought of it, as unbefitting the Messiah; to strengthen them to bear the sight of His humiliation hereafter; and to give them an earnest of the glory into which He would enter when He left them, and thus teach them that, though unseen, He was, more than ever, mighty to help. He was about to receive a solemn consecration for the cross, but, with it, a strong support to His soul in the prospect of such a death. He was a man like ourselves, and His nature, now in its high prime, and delighting in life, must have shrunk from the thought of dying. The prolonged agony and shame of a death so painful and ignominious, must have clouded His spirit at times; but, above all, who can conceive the moral suffering that must have lain in the thought that, though the Holy One, He was to be made an offering for sin; that, though filled with unutterable love to His people, He was to die at their hands as their enemy; that, though innocent and stainless, He was to suffer as a criminal; that, though the beloved Son of God, He was to be condemned as a blasphemer? As He continued praying, His soul rose above all earthly sorrows. Drawn forth by the nearness of His Heavenly Father, the divinity within shone through the veiling flesh till His raiment kindled to the dazzling brightness of light, or of the glittering snow on the peaks above Him, and His face glowed with a sunlike majesty. Amidst such an effulgence it was impossible the three could sleep. Roused by the splendour, they gazed, awe-struck, at the wonder, when lo! two human forms, in glory like that of the angels, stood by His side—Moses and Elijah—the founder, and the great defender of the Old Dispensation, which He had come at once to supersede and to fulfil. Their presence from the upper world was a symbol that the Law and the Prophets henceforth gave place to a higher Dispensation; but they had also another mission. They had passed through death, or at least, from life, and knew the triumph that lay beyond mortality to the faithful servants of God. Who could speak to Him as they of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and temper the gloom of its anticipation? Their presence spoke of the grave conquered, and of the eternal glory beyond. The empty tomb under Mount Abarim, and the horses and chariot of Elijah, dispelled all fears of the future, and instantly banished all human weakness. That His Eternal Father should have honoured and cheered Him by such an embassy at such a time, girt His soul to

the joyful acceptance of the awful task of redemption. Human agitation and spiritual conflict passed away, to return no more in their bitterness till the night before Calvary. His whole nature rose to the height of His great enterprise. Henceforth His one thought was to finish the work His Father had given Him to do.

Meanwhile, the three Apostles, dazzled, confused, and lost in wonder, gazed silently on the amazing sight, and listened. But it is not given to earth to have more than brief glimpses of heaven. Moses and Elijah had erelong finished their mission, and were about to return to the presence of God. Could they not be induced to stay awhile? Peter, ever first to speak, and hardly knowing, in his confusion, what he said, would at least try to prolong such an interview. "Master," said he, to amplify his words, "it is good for us to be here; let us gather some branches from the slopes around, and put up three booths, like those of the Feast of Tabernacles; one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." The cares and troubles of his wandering life, and all his gloomy forebodings for his Master and himself, had faded away before such brightness and joy, and, in his fond child-like simplicity, he dreamed of lengthening out the delight.

The Almighty had come down of old, to Mount Sinai, in blackness, and darkness, and tempest; but now, a bright cloud descended from the clear sky, like that from which He had of old spoken to Moses at the door of the Tabernacle, and overshadowed Jesus and the two heavenly visitors, filling the three Apostles with fear, as they saw it spread round and over their Master, and those with Him. It was the symbol of the presence of God, for He, also, had drawn nigh to bear witness to His Eternal Son. It was not enough that Moses and Elijah had honoured Him—a voice from the midst of the cloud added a still higher testimony—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." Such a confirmation of the great confession of Peter was never to be forgotten. Almost a generation later, when he wrote his second Epistle, the remembrance of this night was as vivid as ever. "We were eye-witnesses," says he, "of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him.' And this voice which came from heaven, we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." The brightness of a vision so amazing lingered in the memory of those who beheld it to the latest day of their lives.

Sore afraid, the three fell on their faces, for who could stand before God? But the Voice had come and gone, and, with it, the Cloud and the visitors from the eternal world; and Jesus was once more alone. Calming their fears by a gentle touch, He bade them "arise and not be afraid," and they found themselves once more alone, Master and followers, with the stars over them, and the silent hills around. The divine glory had faded from His countenance, and His robes were once more like their own, but they could never forget in what Majesty

they had seen Him; never forget, in His humiliation, that they had heard Him called "the beloved Son," by the lips of the Eternal Himself; nor could they ever hesitate whom to obey when they had seen Moses and Elias—representatives of the Law and the Prophets—withdraw before Him, and had heard Him proclaimed from the Cloud of the Presence as far higher than they. God Himself had said, in express words, or in effect, "He who is now with you alone, whose heavenly dignity you have seen, He whom you daily see in His wonted lowliness, is the same, even in this humiliation, as when in the bosom of the Father—'My Son, who pleases me always.' Henceforth receive the Law from His lips alone; henceforth, let all men hear Him only; He is the Living Voice of the unseen God."

It was now morning, and the nine were awaiting the return of their Master and His friends. What the conversation was between Jesus and the three, as they descended from the mountain, is not told us. There was, once more, freedom to speak, though, doubtless, they did so with a strange reverence, hardly venturing to talk of what they had seen and heard. Nor could they relieve their minds by telling the wonders of the night to the others of the Twelve, for even they were so little prepared for such disclosures, that Jesus commanded that the vision should be told "to no man, till the Son of Man be risen from the dead."

It illustrates the difficulty Jesus had to overcome, before new religious ideas could be familiarized to the minds even of those under His continuous teaching, that, though the three had often heard of the resurrection of the dead directly or indirectly from Jesus Himself, they were at a loss to know what the words meant, as He now used them, and disputed among themselves about them. He had told the Jews that if they destroyed the Temple of His body, He should raise it again the third day; and only a week before the Transfiguration, on the day of Peter's memorable utterance, He had used almost the very words which perplexed them now. But though thrice repeated, they were still dark and mysterious.

The resurrection from the dead was, indeed, an article of the current Jewish theology, but it was so taught by the Rabbis, that the three found it hard to reconcile their previous ideas with the language of Jesus. They had heard from some of the preachers in the synagogues, that Israel alone would rise; from others, that the resurrection would include godly heathen also, who had kept the seven commands given to the sons of Noah; from some, that all the heathen outside the holy land would be raised, but only to shame and everlasting contempt before Israel; while still others maintained, that neither the Samaritans, nor the great mass of their own nation, who did not observe the precepts of the Rabbis, would have part in the resurrection. But if there was confusion as to who should rise again, there was still more contradiction between what they had always heard before, of the occasion and time of the resurrection;

and the words that had fallen from Jesus. They had been trained to believe that all Israel would be gathered from the four quarters of the earth at the coming of the Messiah, and that the dead would be raised immediately after. But before this resurrection, which would thus inaugurate the reign of the Messiah, Elias was first to come, and they still clung to this idea, in spite of all that Jesus had said to remove it. They had always, moreover, heard the synagogue preachers say that the holy dead, when thus raised, were to take part in the kingdom of the Messiah, at Jerusalem, and once more become fellow-citizens with the living.

At the mention of the resurrection, therefore, the thought instantly rose in their minds, how it could take place when Elias had not yet appeared, and how Jesus could speak of Himself alone as rising from the grave, and that on the third day. It was clear there must be some contradiction between His words and what they had always been taught. What could He mean by this rising from the dead? Only He could answer. To solve the point they asked Him, "How is it our Rabbis say that Elias must come before the dead shall be raised—that is, before the opening of the reign of the Messiah, which the resurrection is to announce? You speak of yourself rising, alone, from the dead, and that on the third day, and say nothing about this reappearance of Elias, which our Rabbis say is to be three days before the coming of the Messiah. Is it wrong when they tell us that he will stand and weep and lament on the hills of Israel, over the desolate and forsaken land, till his voice is heard through the world, and that he will then cry to the mountains, "Peace and blessing come into the world, peace and blessing come into the world!"—"Salvation cometh, salvation cometh!" and gather all the scattered sons of Jacob, and restore all things in Israel as in ancient times? They say that Elias will turn the hearts of all Israel to receive the Messiah gladly; how is this to be reconciled with your saying that the Messiah must suffer many things of the high priests and rulers, and be rejected and put to death?"

"You are right," replied Jesus, "when you say that Elias must come before me, the Messiah. The purpose of God, and ancient prophecy require it. But, as I, the Son of Man, now when I have come, have to suffer many things, and be set at nought and rejected, as the prophets have foretold, although I have given so many proofs of my heavenly mission; so has it already happened with him who was the Elias sent by my Father to prepare my way. He, like myself, has already come, but they knew him as little as they have known Me, and they have done to him as their hearts wished. He has suffered even to death, as I, the Messiah, must also suffer." Words so precise could not be misunderstood. They saw that He spoke of John the Baptist.

Our moments of exaltation and rapture are only passing, and are often thrown into vivid contrast by the shadows that constantly linger

beside the light. Jesus had left the other disciples at the foot of the mountain when He ascended it with Peter and the sons of Zebedee. The night, with its wondrous vision, had passed away, and He was now returning to His little band, who waited for Him in a neighbouring hamlet or village. The Jewish population scattered round Cæsarea Philippi had already heard of His arrival in their parts, and from various motives had gatheredto see and hear Him. Hence no sooner was He noticed descending the slopes, than the whole multitude moved in His direction to meet Him. His sudden appearance was opportune. An incident had just taken place, which was still exciting no little dispute between some scribes and the disciples. A Jew in the crowd had a son—his only child—who had been afflicted from birth with the form of demoniac possession shown by epilepsy, joined with madness and want of speech. He had brought him in the hope that Jesus would heal him, and the disciples, who had often before wrought similar miracles when sent on tours through the country, had tried, in His absence, to heal the boy, and had failed. It was, indeed, a special case, for the lad was subject to violent convulsions, in which he foamed at the mouth, and gnashed with his teeth, and these had often endangered his life, by coming on him at times when he would have been drowned or burned had not help been near. His whole body, moreover, was withering away under their influence.

The failure of the disciples had, apparently, been connected with the excitement and agitations of the last week. Peter's confession in their name that they believed their Master to be the Messiah, had been sadly overcast by the shock to all their previous ideas given by His repeated intimations of His approaching violent death, and that a similar fate might overtake themselves. It had been a week of spiritual struggle, which Jesus designedly left them to undergo, though He knew, throughout, that one of them would yield to the trial. The nearer the time came for the journey to Judea of which He had spoken, and the less they could conceal from themselves that their devotion to Him was perilous to themselves, the more troubled and faltering grew their minds, and this inevitably affected them in all their relations. In such a hesitating and half-dispirited frame, they had no such triumphant faith as when they had gone out on their first independent apostolic mission and diseases and evil spirits yielded to their commands in their Leader's name. Hence, they had the mortification not only of failing to work a cure, but of having to bear the cavils and sneers of the Rabbis, who were only too glad to seize a momentary triumph at their expense.

Meanwhile, the crowd showed Jesus all outward respect. The report of His wonderful deeds elsewhere had raised an excitement that was visible on every face. They greeted and welcomed Him, and were impatient to hear what He should say in this matter between His followers, and their own doctors.

Turning to these, now in the flush of victory, Jesus disconcerted them by the simple demand to know the matter in dispute. But though they had been bold enough before the simple disciples, they were silent in the commanding presence of their Master.

Presently, the father of the unfortunate boy pressed through the crowd, catching fresh hope that the Teacher could, perhaps, do what the disciples could not. Kneeling before Him, he told all that had happened: how the disciples had been willing to help, but had failed. The whole story kindled Christ's sad indignation. He had been long with both disciples and people, and after all His mighty acts and unwearied teaching, the former had at best a dark and wavering faith, and the latter were ready to reject Him entirely. "O faithless and perverse generation," cried He, "have ye, then, no faith at all? Must I be always present with you? Are all the proofs you have had of my help, when absent from you in body, forgotten? Have not I given you power over demons, and to cure diseases, and promised to be with you, that you might do such wonders? How could you show such want of faith as to doubt my promises, and think anything too difficult either to attempt or do, whether I am present with you or not? Will you never conquer your unbelief? How long shall I suffer you? Where is the boy? Bring him to me."

The boy was brought at once; but his eyes no sooner met those of Jesus than he was seized with a paroxysm of his malady, and fell on the ground, in violent convulsions and foaming at the mouth. Insane, dumb, and writhing on the earth: no sadder spectacle of the kind could well have been seen.

It was desirable that the crowd should have the whole incident impressed on their minds, and it was necessary for the permanent good of the agonized father himself that his faith should be strengthened.

"How long has he suffered in this way?" asked Jesus.

"From childhood, and often the spirit casts him into the water and into the fire, to kill him. But *if Thou canst do anything at all*, have compassion on me and him, and help us."

"*If Thou canst?*" replied Jesus, repeating his words in gentle rebuke.—"All things are possible to him that believes."

The intense emotion of the father could restrain itself no longer. His son's cure had been made to turn on his own confidence in the Healer, and that, even if felt, might not be deep enough to secure the favour so unspeakably wished. In his distress he could only break out into the pitiful cry which has risen from unnumbered hearts since his day, "Yes, I believe: help Thou mine unbelief, if my faith is too weak."

The crowd had been closing in from all sides on Jesus and the unhappy father and son, and further delay was to be avoided. Turning, therefore, to the boy, Jesus addressed the demon: "Speechless and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him." A wild shriek and a dreadful convulsion followed, and then

the boy lay still and motionless, so that he seemed dead. Many, indeed, said he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand, and, lifting him up, delivered him to his father, amidst the loudly-expressed wonder of the multitude at the mighty power of God.

The disciples, humbled by their failure, and unable, in their self-deception, to account for it, took the first opportunity, on their gaining privacy, to ask their Master to what it was owing. "It was simply," said Jesus, "because of your little faith; indeed, I may say your want of faith, for I assure you if you had steadfast, unwavering faith, though ever so small, in my help, and in the power of God, no difficulty would seem too great for you to remove. You know how men call overcoming difficulties 'removing a mountain;' I tell you that no mountain of difficulty would be so great—far less this one which foiled you—that it would not, at the word of firm trust in God, be moved out of your way." "As regards this cure," He added, "you had to do with a kind of demoniac possession, which especially demands strong faith, for every attempt to overcome it without such faith as comes through prayer, so persistent that it neglects even the needs of the body for the time, must be fruitless. It never is the greatness of the difficulty, but only the weakness of your faith, that stands in your way. Remember this in years to come."

Jesus did not stay long in the district of Cæsarea Philippi, but erelong turned once more towards Galilee, probably taking the road by Dan, across the slopes of Lebanon, with the wild reed-forests of the Hulch marshes on its south side, and on its north the huge mountain masses of Lebanon and Hermon, and the broad, well-watered sweep of upland valley between. He would thus most easily reach the hills of Galilee by an unusual route, and escape the publicity of an approach by the ordinary roads. It was the last time He was to visit the scene of so great a part of His public life, and He felt, as He journeyed on, that He could no more pass from village to village as openly as in days gone by, for the eyes of His enemies were everywhere on Him. The time He had previously given to teaching and healing was now devoted mainly to the special preparation of His disciples for the approaching end. Now and then, when special occasion demanded, He was as ready as ever to relieve the wretched, or to justify and repeat the words which He had so often delivered in the synagogues; but He usually shunned notice, not wishing, in the words of St. Mark, that any man should know. Avoiding the more populous places, and seeking by-paths among the hills, where He would meet few and be little known, He made His way towards His old home, Capernaum. But He could no longer show Himself anywhere as He had done in the days of His popularity, for every word or act would have created new excitement, and given a fresh ground for accusation. He had resolved to go to Jerusalem and there meet His fate, but He could only do this by guarding against anything which might lead to His arrest in Galilee, for in that case He would be tried

and condemned by a local court. Jerusalem alone must see the catastrophe, for it was the centre of the nation, the headquarters of the priesthood and Rabbis—His enemies—and His death then would be distinctly their work: their open and formal rejection, as representatives of the nation, of the New Kingdom, and of Himself as the Messiah.

He stayed in Galilee, therefore, only so long as His purpose to go to Jerusalem permitted, and meanwhile withdrew from public life, to devote Himself especially to the Twelve and prepare them for His death, of which He seems to have spoken very often. One of the fragments of His intercourse with them, while slowly journeying onwards to His own town, has been preserved to us. "You have heard," said He, "how the multitudes express their amazement at the mighty power of God shown in the miracles they have seen me perform, as in the case of the cure of the boy, after my descent from the mount. Let their words, in which they have thus acknowledged and magnified my acts as not less than divine, sink into your memories, and strengthen and confirm your faith in me as the Messiah. For I, the Son of Man—the Messiah—whose mighty works you have heard extolled so greatly, might easily have set myself at the head of the people, and, led them by supernatural power, as they and their chief men wish, to outward national glory. But I will assuredly be delivered up and abandoned by these very crowds, and given over to the authorities, because I will not use my power for any but holy and spiritual ends. I will be betrayed into the hands of my enemies, and they will put me to death, but I shall rise again on the third day."

They were too full of their worldly hopes, which still mingled strangely with their vague recognition of their Master as the Son of God; too unwilling also to think earnestly on a subject so unpleasant, and so opposed to their ideas of the Messiah, to understand what He meant by these sad forebodings. He needed only speak the word and the people would follow Him, and He might, by His miraculous power, which it seemed to them could not be used for a nobler end, set up the theocracy, as even John, apparently, had expected He would. Such language seemed part of His dark sayings, with a secret meaning which He would some day explain. They would fain have wished this explanation, indeed, at once, to calm their minds, but they hesitated to ask Him for it. He might, perhaps, if they did so, tell them something still more unpleasant, as He had done lately to Peter, in a similar case. Besides, they did not like to think about what they so much disrelished, and turned from matters which only filled them with gloom to others more in keeping with their wishes and hopes.

These offered themselves in the distinction Jesus often seemed to make in His bearing to one or other of their number. Human nature is always the same, and jealousy was as rife in those days as now. However impartially He might treat them, their own characteristics made it impossible that He should be as intimate and confidential

with some as with others. In some cases, as in the Transfiguration, lately, He had thought fit to take only a few of them with Him, and He seemed lately to have put especial honour on Peter, while His friendship for John was closer and more tender than for any other. All this, however, would have troubled the less favoured ones little but for their almost invincible belief that He would soon proclaim Himself as the Messiah in the Jewish sense, and found a great political kingdom. Everything was seen through this preconception, and any marks of preference were taken as indications of future position in the expected revolution. They assumed that, having been chosen from all their countrymen by Jesus as His closest followers, they would have the chief places in the new empire He was to found, but there was abundant room for jealousy in their individual claims to this or that prominent dignity. Accustomed to discuss everything openly, they naturally fell into warm controversy as to the just distribution of the great offices of state among them, when Jesus should be installed as Monarch of the world at Jerusalem.

In this dispute, however, their Master took no part. Nor, indeed, did they wish Him to do so, for they had fallen behind, in order that He might not hear them. They were ashamed to have Him know what occupied their thoughts, so little in harmony with His teaching and spirit. But He had noticed it all, though He said nothing for the moment. Meanwhile they once more entered Capernaum.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BEFORE THE FEAST.

THERE is something intensely human in the return of Jesus to Capernaum in the face of imminent danger. It had been His home, and He was in all sinless regards a man. He longed to see the old familiar spots once more; the hills behind the town, among which He had so often wandered; the shady woods, and orchards, and vineyards, rich in foliage, or glowing with their ripening fruit in these summer months. He had often looked out from them on the sparkling waters, and, above all, had met among them the few whom He had gathered round Him in His long sojourn as their fellow-citizen. These He would now fain strengthen in their faith, before leaving them for ever.

His entrance into the town was marked by an application to Peter by the local collectors of the Temple tax, for its payment by his Master. Moses had provided funds for the erection of the Tabernacle, by the imposition of a tax of half a shekel on each male, payable at the "numbering of the people," and this, since the Babylonish Captivity, had been required yearly. It was equal, nominally, to about one and threepence of our money, but really to at least six

times as much, and was demanded from every Israelite of the age of twenty—even the poorest.

It was mainly from this heavy tax, paid as a sacred duty by every Jew, in whatever country, that the Temple treasury was filled with the millions of silver coins which were so strong a temptation to lawless greed. Crassus, Sabinus, and Pilate, in succession, had laid violent hands on this unmeasured wealth, and the reckless greed of Florus in its plunder was the proximate cause of the last great war, which destroyed both Temple and city.

The Shelihim, or "messengers," who collected this tax in Judea, visited each town at fixed times. In foreign countries places were appointed for its collection in every city or district where there were Jews—and where were they not?—the chief men of their community in each acting as treasurer, and conveying the amounts in due course to Jerusalem. Three huge chests, carefully guarded in a particular chamber in the Temple, held the yearly receipts, which served, besides providing the beasts for sacrifice, to pay the Rabbis, inspectors of victims, copyists, bakers, judges, and others connected with the Temple service, and numerous women who wove or washed the Temple linen. It supplied, also, the costs of the water supply, and of the repairs of the vast Temple buildings.

The collection began in the Holy Land on the 1st of Adar—part of our February and March—the month of the "returning sun," and the next before that of the Passover. By the middle of it the official exchangers in each town had set up their tables, and opened their two chests for the tax of the current and of the past year, for many paid the tax for two years, together. They supplied the old sacred shekel, coined by Simon the Maccabee, for a trifling charge, to all who required it, for only that coin was received by the Temple authorities in homage to Pharisaic and national sentiment. At first everything was left to the good will of the people, but after the 25th, prompt payment was required, and securities, such as an under garment, or the like, were taken even from the pilgrims coming up to the feast.

It was very likely, therefore, that the time of grace had expired before Jesus reached Capernaum, so that the collectors—apparently respectable citizens—felt themselves justified in broaching the question to Peter—whether his Teacher did not pay the two drachmas? Perhaps they fancied He was of the irreconcilable school of Judas the Galilæan, who would pay no Temple tax so long as the Holy City was polluted by the heathen Roman. His enemies, indeed, very likely had insinuated that this was the case, to bring Him into suspicion with government.

Peter, ever zealous for his Master's honour, and, as usual, impulsive, no sooner heard the application than he answered affirmatively, on his own authority, and forthwith set off to find Jesus and report the matter to Him.

The exact time for payment had passed while Christ had been away from Capernaum, and the collectors were, doubtless, anxious to gather all arrears, to take with them to Jerusalem at the approaching Feast of Tabernacles in September. As if to show that not even the most insignificant matter that concerned His disciples escaped His notice, even when not bodily present with them, Peter no sooner appeared than his errand was anticipated by asking him his opinion, whether, when kings levy taxes or tolls, they exacted them from their own children, or only from their subjects?

"I think," replied Peter, "that only the subjects pay." "Then, of course," replied Jesus, "the king's children are free."

He wished to show that it would have been no failure of duty to leave the tax unpaid. Peter had already owned Him as the "Son of God," and it was for the Temple of God the impost was levied. It might, therefore, be just and proper to collect it from the nation at large, but it was not fitting to ask it from Him. "I am a king and a king's son; far more than any Roman or Herodian prince—for I am the Son of God, as thou hast said, and this tax is for my Father—God—the Great King; for His Temple, and thus I should be free."

But, while thus maintaining to His apostle His rightful immunity, He was too prudent to urge it in public. He was not recognized as the Son of God outside the little circle of His disciples, but was only an Israelite, like others, to men at large, and, as such, was under the Law. It would have given ground of accusation and misconception had He hesitated to pay what all Jews paid cheerfully, as a religious duty.

"It would not do for me, nevertheless," continued He, therefore, "to seem to refuse. They would not understand what I have been saying to you. Take your line, and go to the lake; you need not wait till you catch a number of fish to make up the amount. Take the first that comes to your hook, and you will find in its mouth a stater, which is twice as much as is needed. With it you can pay for me and for yourself."

The result is not given, but there can be no question that the command secured its own fulfilment. No lesson could have been given more suited to benefit Peter and his companions. It taught them that, though they were His apostles, they could not claim exemption from labour for their own support, but yet quickened them to a firm repose on His watchful care, which could help them in any extremity.

They remained for a short time in Capernaum, and, happily, we have a glimpse of their quiet private intercourse; doubtless the picture of many such occasions. He had delayed allusion to their hot discussion on the way till the quiet of evening and home.

"Tell me," said He, turning to one of them, "about what were you disputing among yourselves on the road?" But the question received no answer, for all were alike ashamed of their unworthy jealousies and ambitions, and sat humbled and silent.

It was an opportunity for impressing on them, once more, the fundamental characteristic of His kingdom. Their daily work, as disciples, reminded them continually of their relations to it, and it already engrossed their thoughts, but they still failed to realize its purely spiritual character. The trials waiting them rendered it, thus, the more necessary to strengthen and support them beforehand, by correcting their misapprehensions, and elevating their tone.

In the Sermon on the Mount they had heard, if they could have understood it, how utterly His kingdom contrasted with all their previous ideas. They had been told, in effect, that moral fitness alone secured entrance to it, and that every external claim; whether the fulfilment of legal duties, or national privilege, or sacred calling—whatever had, hitherto, been supposed to give a title to membership in the old Theocracy, must be abandoned as worthless. The reign of God, now proclaimed, was, in fact, only the homage of the soul, which had prepared itself, like a purified Temple, by humble repentance and holy life, to be a habitation of His Heavenly Father. Man must only receive from God: not pretend to give to Him.

Citizenship in the new kingdom of the Messiah was possible, only when no thought of claim obtruded.

It was thus, in effect, simply a reproduction of the spirit of Jesus Himself that was demanded, for the great characteristic which gave His life its matchless beauty, was His perfect divine humility. His lowly meekness had protected Him at the opening of His ministry, when tempted to self-exaltation: it had subordinated His own will, as by a law of His being, to that of God; it had opened His heart to the poor of His nation, cast out and despised by the religious pride of the day; it had made Him, throughout, the friend of the oppressed, the lowly, and the wretched; it had led Him, of His free choice, to despise all worldly honour, and it was now bearing Him, with a kingly grandeur, to the abasement of the Cross, that He might open to His nation, and to mankind, the way to peace with their Father in Heaven, and found a kingdom of holiness, truth, and love; to ennoble and bless the present, and expand into eternal felicity in the world to come.

It was vital, therefore, for His disciples, then, as now, that they should have the same heavenly temper. Without it, they could neither be efficient instruments in spreading His kingdom, nor have any share in it themselves, for it was, itself, the Kingdom—the reign of God, in the soul. The danger of self-elevation had been greatly increased from the moment when Jesus had accepted from them their formal ascription of the Messianic dignity, at Cæsarea Philippi. What seductive dreams lay for Galilæan fishermen in their being commissioned by the Messiah, as His confidential friends, and the first dignitaries of His kingdom! They had, indeed, heard Jesus speak of suffering a shameful death, as the immediate result of His proclaiming Himself as the Messiah, but when the mind is already

preoccupied by its own views, it is incredibly hard to turn it. Even the most discouraging incidents are transformed into supports, or at least argued aside. "Perhaps Jesus had only spoken thus to try them: perhaps it was one of the dark sayings He used so often." Their future dignity in the kingdom had been the topic of constant disputes and discussions, ever since the eventful day at Cæsarea Philippi. Had they not received spiritual graces and powers? For what had they gone through so much toil and danger? The reward could not be far distant. When it came, which of them should have the first place, and be the Minister of the New Reign?

They must be taught how utterly they deceived themselves.

Jesus had sat down in the house and called the Twelve before putting the question. As they stood round Him,—for disciples of a Rabbi always stood when their masters sat down to teach them,—His first words scattered the whole unworthy dream of their hearts.

"Whoever of you," said He, "it matters not which, seeks to be before the other, and would distinguish himself in my Kingdom, can only do so by cheerfully stooping to render even the humblest services to all the rest. He must show himself the willing servant of all, by doing whatever he can to serve the others. He must seek and find his greatness in being the humblest, and, therefore, the servant of all."

Such language was well-nigh incomprehensible to men misled by worldly pride and ambition. They were thinking of themselves rather than of their Master; of receiving rather than rendering; of selfish ease and honour, rather than loving self-sacrifice, which He had often told them was the condition of their discipleship. De, therefore, resolved to bring them to a better frame, and this by an illustration rather than words. They knew, by experience, that even His most unpalatable and His darkest words, had a greater fulness of truth than their imperfect insight could realize. They had, doubtless, also, at times, misgivings respecting their dreams of the future, though they could not as yet lay these aside. Some of them had even gone so far as to ask Him the particular dignities He intended for each, that all future strife might be checked by an authoritative announcement.

Calling to Him a little boy of the household; lifting him in His arms, and pressing him fondly to His breast,—as if to show how much nearer such an one was to Him than the Twelve standing at a distance round,—He drew their attention to the child. Love of children and of their childish traits, had always marked Him. A child, in His eyes, was a type of the grace so dear to Him—humility. It raises no overweening claims such as men advance, and accepts all its relations in life as it finds them; it adapts itself unconsciously to the lowliest and most ungenial lot, and finds happiness in it. It is the embodiment of dependence and need; of having nothing, and yet looking with simple trust to a higher than itself.

The Twelve noted His act with wonder, not knowing what it meant. He now proceeded to explain it.

"You see this child," said He: "I tell you solemnly, that, unless you abandon your present worldly ideas and ambitious thoughts, and become as simple and humble as it, and as lovingly dependent on God as it is on man, you shall not even enter my Kingdom, far less hold a high place in it. You see how this child has no thought but of perfect loving trust towards me; how it does not pretend to give the worth of what it receives, but opens its whole soul to me with artless innocence. Such sweet humility must be found in him who would seek to be greatest in my New Kingdom. To have the heart of a child is the fixed abiding condition of admission, of accepted service, or of honour. This child is willing to be the least of you all, and to serve you all, and, as I have said, whoever of you is like it in this, is the greatest among you. Your ambition must guide itself by this rule. Your strife shows that you have not yet rightly grasped the true nature of my Kingdom. It has no external dignities of power and rank, for it is a reign of principles, not a worldly dominion. All its members are therefore, brethren, on a footing of perfect equality. Any one may, indeed, distinguish himself beyond others, but not as in the Old Testament Kingdom, or as in that of the Messiah expected by the nation at large, by external honour and dignity. The honours of my Kingdom are won only by spiritual likeness to myself, your example and Master. Self-denial, self-sacrifice; the surrender of person and goods for the sake of the brotherhood; unselfish love—are the only path to the highest place."

He had now answered the question; but the sight of the child kindled another thought of no less moment. "You are looking for great events, and thinking with weak pride, of your claims as my followers, and may be tempted to slight and despise any one as spiritless, and beneath you, who is humble and unassuming, like this child on my knee. But let me tell you, that any one who honours and receives to his heart even a single child-like soul which delights in meekness and humility, as learned from me, has done the same in spirit, and will receive a like reward, as if he had received me myself, and done me personal honour. And since all that is done to me from an honest heart, is homage done to my Father who sent me, He Himself will show His approval, for even the humblest that lives, if he be my disciple, is great and honoured before Him."

The use of the words "in my name" had, meanwhile, recalled an incident of their recent journey to John, "the Son of Thunder." The Twelve had met, in their way, one casting out devils in the name of Jesus, though he was not one of their company, and instead of "receiving" him, had charged him to desist, because he was not of their own number. John now reported the matter, as if struck by the contrast between his own conduct and the counsel just given. "Forbid him not," replied Jesus,—"One who, though not of my

circle, has yet attained so strong a faith in me that he works miracles through my name, needs not be feared as likely, by any sudden change, to speak against me." The want of forbearance had sprung from the want of humility, for pride is the special source of impatience. "He who is not against us," continued Jesus, "is for us." He whom John had treated so harshly had, at least, acted in His name, though, perhaps, with a very imperfect conception of His true dignity, or of the scope and greatness of His work. But he was very different from the blasphemers who did not shrink from speaking of the Holy Spirit as a spirit of evil. Moreover, the nearer the end approached, the more needful it was to root out any signs of selfish or haughty feelings in the Twelve, and to lead them to look with kindly eyes on even a partial, if friendly relationship to Him. He wished them to realize that worthiness to rank in the New Society was shown by the goodwill, and trustful, child-like spirit, which led to devotion to Him, rather than by the measure of knowledge evinced. It was of great moment, at this time, to wake kindly and broad-hearted feelings towards any, who, while acting apart, were yet friendly. Were He once gone, it would be left to His disciples to continue His work, and it would depend upon them whether the Society, founded by Him, would be really the beginning of a new epoch in religion, or only a piece of new cloth sewed on an old garment; whether it would be a Jewish sect or a faith for mankind.

"No one is to be lightly esteemed," continued Jesus, "who shows you the slightest mark of goodwill or friendship, were it only a drink of cold water, which all give so readily in these sultry lands—when given because you are my disciples. Even this will be rewarded by God as an act worthy His favour. Nor are you only thus honoured. So precious to Me is the humble child-like spirit which you are disposed to despise, that if any one, by words or deeds, cause even one such soul who believes, to turn away from me; as you were in danger of doing when you forbade the stranger to cast out devils in my name; it would be better for him that a huge ass-mill-stone were hung round his neck and he drowned in the depths of the lake, that he might be saved from so great a sin.

"Alas for the world-wide sorrow which the sins of many who will call themselves mine will cause, by keeping men from me! They will judge of me by these unworthy followers, and keep aloof from my kingdom. It cannot, indeed, be otherwise, for the evil that is in man will make even the name of religion a scandal. But how awful the judgment that awaits him who leads another from the way of life!

"I have said that it would be better for a man to die than that he should lead another astray. So, whatever may lead you to sin, and thus bring scandal on my name, had much better be put from you, at any cost. If anything, therefore, however dear to you, incites you to sin, or keeps you from a godly life, thrust it from you. If

the most precious members of the body—a foot or a hand—be cut off, to prevent death of the whole; how much rather, at any sacrifice, whatever sins of thought or act, which, by misleading others, would cause us to lose eternal life, and be cast into hell-fire, where their worm never dies, and the fire is not quenched!

"Every one cast into the fire, which the prophet thus calls unquenchable—every one, that is, who gives himself up to sin, shall certainly suffer the wrath of God, and be salted with fire, as the victims on the altar are salted with salt. But every one whose humble and steadfast faith in me has shown him to be, as it were, a pure and worthy sacrifice, fit to be laid on the altar of God, will, on his entrance into the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah, be salted, not with fire, but with the gift of higher grace, that he may endure unto life eternal. Salt is of value to prevent corruption, and I have, before now, called you 'the salt of the earth;' because, if you are my true disciples, you will arrest the corruption that prevails among men, and make the community sound. How dreadful, however, if you, the salt, lose your savour. How will you regain it? If *you* turn to evil, and, through sloth or faint-heartedness, be untrue to your calling, how can your needful energy and efficiency be restored? You wish to be accepted at last as pure and worthy offerings to God, and to receive the gift of heavenly wisdom, which is everlasting life. To attain it, take care to guard the salt of true wisdom which has been already given you—the grace bestowed on you to be my disciples. Remember, moreover, that salt is the symbol of peace; be at peace among yourselves, and do not dispute and argue as you have been doing, lest you lose the power and fruits of my teaching."

Jesus had for the time digressed from His original subject—the humble and child-like among His followers—but now returned to it.

"Respecting those little ones of whom I was speaking—lowly, self-distrustful; as weak, yet, it may be, in faith, as little children in strength—I would further say: Take heed that ye do not slight or contemn any one of them, for I tell you so greatly honoured and so dear are they in the sight of God, that the humblest of them, for their very humility, are placed by Him under the loving care of the highest angels, who stand before Him, and see His face continually. Glorious though all angels be, only such exalted spirits—the princes of heaven—are thought worthy by God to minister to them and protect them.

"To slight or despise even one such would, indeed, be to undo, so far, the very end for which I have come as the Messiah. You may, by doing so, turn him away from me, and so cause his soul to be lost. Much rather, if you meet with an humble spirit, still weak in the faith, which has gone astray, should you do your utmost to bring it back. For what shepherd feeding, it may be, a hundred sheep, in our upland pastures, if one of them stray, does not leave the ninety and nine, and set off into the hills to seek for the one that has wan-

dered? And if he be so happy as to find it, I tell you, beyond doubt, he rejoices more over the one thus saved than over the ninety and nine that had not strayed. In the same way as it grieves the shepherd that even one of his sheep should be lost, so it grieves my Father in Heaven that one of these feeble, simple souls should perish, and it sorely displeases Him if it perish by the neglect or fault of any of my disciples.

"Let me pass to a distinct, yet related subject—the proper treatment of a brother in the faith who does you any wrong, by anger, envy, selfishness, or in any other way. Do not wait till he who has thus injured you comes to you to make amends, but go to him by yourself, and tell him his fault in private; that, if possible, you may get him to own it between you and him alone, and thus the scandal of difference between disciples spread no farther, and he be won for my New Kingdom, from which he would have been shut out, if, by refusing to be reconciled, he had shown no repentance. Seek his good, not your own justification merely: however wronged, think less of yourself than of his eternal salvation.

"If, however, he will not listen to your kindly remonstrance and persuasion, go a second time to him, taking two or three witnesses with you, as Moses directed in other cases; if, perchance, though he had not been moved by your single appeal, that of two or three supporting you, may lead him to see and acknowledge his fault. Their testimony, besides, will prevent his denial of his confession, should he make one, and afterwards repudiate it; while, if he refuse to listen and to admit his fault, and the matter must be brought before the Assembly, it will support and confirm at once the fact of your private visit for attempted reconciliation, and his stubborn refusal to hear even the two or three brethren you took with you on the second visit.

"The Rabbis enjoin that the offender shall go to him whom he has injured, and own his fault, and that if he cannot thus procure forgiveness, he shall take others with him and seek to obtain it; but I require that he who is wronged do this, that he may show his humility, and his patient love for a guilty brother.

"You know, moreover, how a stubborn offender, who refuses private amends, is at last proclaimed as such, in the Synagogue and in the schools. In my New Society, the congregation of the new Israel—the Kahal, or assembly of my followers, which will, hereafter, be called the Church, is to make a third final attempt to win the guilty one to repentance. You are to tell the facts to the 'congregation,' and ask their godly offices, and they, through appointed representatives, will then seek to bring him to a right frame of mind. If, after all, he refuse to hear even the congregation, you are freed from further responsibility, and are absolved from all further religious relationship to him, as you have hitherto thought yourselves to be from the heathen, and from men of vicious life, such as the publi-

cans. Not that you are to despise him, or refuse him the common offices of humanity, as your countrymen do to such classes, for you are still to love and seek to win him back, even till the very last, as your Heavenly Father does with the unthankful and evil.

"Let every offender think how solemn his position will be if thus obdurate before the congregation. I have already given Peter—as the key-bearer of my spiritual Temple—the New Society I have founded—power to forbid and allow, to enact and define, what is needed for its future government and discipline, and have told you that what he ordains, so far as it is in harmony with the mind of the Spirit of God, will be confirmed by me in heaven, as if I were still with you on earth. This power I now extend to you all, my twelve faithful followers, and I give you, as a body, the same assurance of my confirmation of what you appoint for the government of my Society. Peter is, thus, only the first among equals. If the remedy I have pointed out be insufficient, as my Society extends, to meet such offences, I leave it to you to devise and apply what other means may seem needed, as the occasion demands. And that you may feel how formally and solemnly I now, before my departure, depute this power to you, I tell you, further, that if two of you shall agree on any matter, thus affecting the salvation of souls by the right discipline of my Society, or for other good ends, and shall ask my Father in Heaven to grant your desire, He will do so. For where two or three of you are gathered together in my name, I am in their midst, so that you need not doubt my promise that what even so few agree to ask my Father, in matters pertaining to my kingdom, will be granted."

The Twelve had listened to their Master in reverent silence, but now the ever self-asserting Peter, still intensely Jewish in feeling, interrupted Him by a question conceived in the narrow and formal spirit of Rabbinism.

"Lord," said he, "our teachers tell us that if a person do us wrong we are to forgive him, a first, second, and third time, but not a fourth. What sayest Thou? Would seven times be enough?"

"I am far from limiting my requirement to seven times," replied Jesus. "So far from that, if you be of a truly humble and child-like spirit, as you ought, you will forgive to seventy times seven—that is, any number of times. Let me show you my thoughts on this point by a parable."

"The subjects of my kingdom are like the servants of a certain ruler, with whom their lord would make a reckoning. So he called before him his revenue collectors—the gatherers of his taxes and tolls, and demanded a settlement from them. Among others, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents—that is, thirty millions of shekels—a sum it was hopeless for him to think of repaying. When the king heard how much he owed, he cried out that 'he *would* be paid,' and commanded him to be sold as a slave,

with his wife and children, and all that he had, in payment of the debt. On hearing this, the servant fell down before him, beseeching him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.' At this his lord was moved with compassion, and having ordered him to be unbound, not only gave him time, as he had asked, but, knowing he could never pay, forgave him the debt altogether.

"This servant, however, thus freely forgiven, went out and found one of his fellow-servants who owed him a hundred denarii—less than the seven hundreth-thousandth of what he had himself owed—and laid hold of him by the throat, saying fiercely, 'Pay what you owe.' The debtor thereupon fell down at his feet, as he had fallen at those of his lord, and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee.' But he had no pity, and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. His fellow-servants, seeing what was being done, were troubled at such hard-heartedness, and at the ill-treatment of the poor man, and came and told their lord all that had happened. Then the lord, having called the offender, said to him, 'O thou wicked servant, I forgave you all the great debt you owed me, because you asked me, though you sought only time, not forgiveness. Should not you, also, have had pity on your fellow-servant, as I had pity on you?' And his lord was indignant, and delivered him over to the torturers, to deal with him in the prison-house as they thought fit, till he should pay all that was due to him.

"So, the forgiveness God has granted you, of your great debt to Him, which you could never pay—the guilt of your sins—must lead you from your heart to forgive your brother man, not seven, but any number of times, the far smaller debt he may owe you; for if you do not forgive him, the wrath of God will burn upon you at the great day, and you will be cast into everlasting punishment."

The transcendent loftiness of Christ's spiritual nature shines out through this whole episode. In His perfect humility He makes no personal claims. As, on every occasion, He declares simplicity and lowliness, like that of childhood, the mark of true discipleship; asks no higher or more signal acknowledgment, as a man, than was to be shown to all others; and ranks the friendly and kind treatment of any of His followers as if done to Himself. He demands no exclusive honour, but, on the contrary, every childlike spirit in the kingdom of God has in His sight a priceless value, however slight the instance by which its character was shown. The good deed done to the least of His people, is considered as personal to Himself. Neither now, nor at any time, does He bear Himself as one to whom all were to bow as servants; He takes His place in the midst of the little band round Him, as one who shares with them the highest and holiest joys. Within this circle we ever find Him strengthening and encouraging each to surrender himself for the good of the rest, and to cheer and honour especially, the humblest, the least seemed, the most unpretentious; or, it may be, the mere workers

who could not push themselves into notice. Meek and lowly in heart, He was no less of an infinite pity. The New Society, taught by His example and words, learned that they were to reproduce the spirit of little children, in that hitherto unimagined grandeur of humility which almost rejoices to suffer because it gives an opportunity to forgive.

CHAPTER XLIX.

AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

The seventh month, Tisri, part of our September and October—"the month of the full streams," and the autumnal equinox, had now come. Nisan, "the flower month," known of old as Abib, "the earing month," had seen the Passover pass without the presence of Jesus. Ijjar, "the beautiful month," with its blossoming trees; Siwan, "the bright;" Tammuz; Ab, "the fruit month;" and Elul, "the month of wine;" had gone by in the journey to Tyre and Sidon, and to Cæsarea Philippi. Jesus had now been well-nigh half a year little better than an outlawed fugitive, hiding, in unsuspected districts, from His enemies. The fifteenth day of Tisri was the first of the great harvest feast of the year—that of Tabernacles—a time all the more joyful from its coming only four days after the Day of Atonement—the close of the Jewish Lent. Galilee was no longer open to Him, and the Kingdom was yet to be proclaimed in Jerusalem, the haughty city of the Temple, and of David. He knew that to go there would be, sooner or later, to die; but, with this clearly before Him, He calmly resolved, at the summons of duty, to transfer the sphere of His activity from the remote and secluded security of the north to the headquarters of the Rabbis and priests. He had come into the world to be the Lamb of God, bringing salvation to His people and mankind by the proclamation of the New Kingdom, sealed with His blood; and Jerusalem alone, the seat of the dispensation He came to supersede, was the fitting scene for inaugurating the economy that was to take its place.

He was still in Capernaum when the great caravan of pilgrims began to pass to the feast. His relations, who, as yet, had declared neither for nor against Him, had, apparently, come over from Nazareth to get Him to go up to Jerusalem with them. They could not have felt any hostility to One whose holy life had passed under their eyes, but, like the nation at large, they clung to what they had always been taught by the Rabbis, that the Messiah was to restore Israel to national glory, and to transfer the sceptre of universal power from Rome to Jerusalem. In their worldly wisdom they could not understand Him. It seemed to them unwise that He should stay in a corner of the land, if He wished to establish the kingdom of the Messiah. The Rabbis, as He knew, taught that it was to be set up in

Jerusalem, and it was clear that it could be extended best from the Holy City, as a centre. Why did He not go up with them now, they asked, to the feast, that all who were friendly to Him, or who might become so, might see His miracles, and thus be constrained to support Him? "Nobody," they urged, "who aimed at being a great national leader, as they fancied He did, by His claiming to be the Messiah, could hope for success if He wrought all the "signs" which were to rally the people round Him, in an out-of-the-way place like Galilee. He had not been at the last Passover, or at Pentecost, when the people were gathered in the Holy City from all the land, and, indeed, from all the world; but He might, perhaps, repair this error even yet, if He went up now, and showed His power before the assembled myriads of Israel. If they accepted Him as Messiah, their very numbers would sweep away the heathen like chaff before the wind, especially when supported by miraculous help. It was unwise to keep back in this obscure and hidden district; He should show Himself openly to the Jewish world, which He could only do in Jerusalem."

"You think the present the fit moment for carrying out my plans," said Jesus. "You err. It is not yet the divinely appointed time for my doing this. You may go up openly before all Israel, at any time, because you and they are at one in not receiving me. They have no reason to hate you, nor have the priests and Rabbis, their leaders; but they hate me, because I, the Light of the world—the true Messiah—on whom all should believe, am a standing protest against them, that they sin in hating and persecuting me, as a transgressor of the Law and a blasphemer, because I have witnessed against their corruption and hypocrisy. They wish a political Messiah: I seek only spiritual ends. Go up, yourselves. The present time does not suit me to go with you." Their hope that He would lift the family to the highest honour, by heading a national Messianic movement, had come to nothing.

The object of His delay was to avoid going with the great Galilæan caravan, which entered the Holy City with public rejoicings. He would be recognized at once, and the multitude, in the excitement of the time, might again try to force Him into political action. Publicity and popular enthusiasm would have drawn the attention of those in power, and this He at present earnestly wished to avoid. His work was not to be rashly broken off by any imprudent act, for He needed all the opportunities that remained, to devote Himself to the Twelve and to His other followers. He could go up a few days later, and thus avoid the caravan. The feast lasted seven days, closing with the eighth as the greatest, and thus, even if He started later, He could mingle with the multitudes, and find out how men felt towards Him and His work, and proclaim the New Kingdom as He saw fit. The danger would be averted, and His great end better served. It was more in keeping with His spirit to avoid all appear-

ance of courting popularity, and to deliver His great message of love in stillness; leaving its reception to its own charms, and to the lowly humility, self-denial, and gentleness, with which it was delivered.

Waiting, therefore, for some days, till things were quiet, He started with the Twelve, and a number of disciples, for Jerusalem. Crossing Esdraelon, now stripped of its harvest, Engannim, the "fountain of gardens," saw Him once more on Samaritan soil. The caravans had perhaps gone over the Jordan, to travel down its eastern bank, and thus avoid the pollution of the direct route through hated Samaria.

He had been kindly received in the alien district on His former passage through it, northwards, but He was now going towards Jerusalem instead of leaving it, and this was enough to rouse the bitterness of the Samaritans. As was His custom, He had sent on messengers before Him to secure hospitality for the night, but it was at once refused. John and James—"the Sons of Thunder"—who had perhaps been the messengers, were especially indignant, and showed how little they had profited by the lessons of meekness they had so long been receiving. With the harsh Jewish feeling which regarded every one except a Jew as accursed, and hateful to God, and sought to establish the New Kingdom, not by mildness and love, but by force, they would fain have had fire called down from heaven to consume the unfriendly village. They had likely spoken of Jesus as the Messiah, or, perhaps, His fame as such, may have already crossed the border. But the Samaritans expected from the Messiah that He would restore the Temple on Mount Gerizim, and instead of that, Jesus was going up to a feast in Jerusalem. John and James, however, could make no allowance. Elias had once called fire from heaven in his own honour: how much more should men perish who had rejected the Messiah. The teaching of Jesus had not as yet softened the fierce Jewish spirit of the Twelve. Fanatical bitterness had struck its roots into their deepest nature. How utterly were they still wanting in patience towards the erring, and filled only with the thought of wrath and destruction! They had not yet realized that the kingdom of Jesus is one of faith alone: that it cannot be spread by compulsion and violence, but must spring from humility and love; that it must rest on free and honest conviction, and can grow strong and abiding only when a child-like spirit obeys and advances it.

Deeply troubled, and no less offended, Jesus turned towards the fierce zealots, and rebuked their foolish and cruel harshness. They had heard Him say that He came to serve, not to reign; to suffer for others, not to inflict suffering on any; and He had but lately told them, once and again, how He was about to give Himself up to death for the good of the world. But though their ears had heard, and their conscience approved, their hearts had not willingly accepted the intimation, and hence they were ever exposed to fall back into Jewish fanaticism. Rebuking them sternly, He taught them a needed lesson, by merely passing to another village.

It was hard for the disciples to realize that, to be followers of Jesus, they must surrender themselves unconditionally to the will of God, and devote themselves to the work of the Kingdom, without a lingering tie to the world they had left. The circumstances demanded explicit statements of what discipleship thus involved, and hence, when fresh applicants for the honour presented themselves, Jesus was more frank and earnest, if possible, than ever before, in setting the cost before them. A Samaritan had come forward asking leave to follow Him; as if to show that all were not like the villagers who had treated Him so unkindly. It may be he had very imperfect ideas of what his wish implied, but Jesus did not leave him in doubt. He told him all His own position, and all that awaited His disciples: that He had forsaken house and home for ever, and that the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, had a lot to be envied compared with His.

The seeming harshness of His replies to two others, perhaps Samaritans, who also asked leave to follow Him, is explained by these facts. From the first He had held out no rewards, but predicted only privation and suffering to His disciples, but these were closer at hand now than they had been when He called the Twelve. To follow Him had come to mean, literally, to leave all, and to make up one's mind to the worst. He was a mark for the fiercest hatred of those in authority, and His circle could not escape suffering with their Master. The most utter, unqualified devotion, the purest spirit of self-sacrifice, were required. "Let the dead; those who will not receive the preaching of the Kingdom, bury their dead," said He, to one who wished to bury his father. "Surrender yourself utterly to God." Another, whose want of the supreme resolution demanded, showed itself in a request to be allowed to bid farewell to his friends, was told that it could not be. "The prayers, the tears of your circle at home, might shake your decision to consecrate yourself wholly to the kingdom of God."

It was now many months since the sending out of the Twelve on their first missionary journey. It had been necessary to confine them to strictly Jewish ground, to avoid offence, and from their own defective sympathy with other populations. Both difficulties were now, however, in part, removed: the openly hostile attitude of the leaders of the nation made it unnecessary to consider their prejudices; the Apostles had, in some degree, gained broader charity, and, above all, the near approach of the end made it desirable that the full grandeur of the New Kingdom, as intended for all men alike, should be clearly shown before its founder's death, that there might be no possible misconception afterwards. Jesus had always yearned to proclaim the words of life to the different races whom He saw around Him. A boundless field opened itself for the missionary labours of any number of disciples, and He now had round Him a larger number than before, whom He could thus send out. He de-

termined, therefore, to send out no fewer than seventy disciples; in the Jewish opinion, the number of the nations of the world. The lesson could not be doubtful. It was a significant announcement that, for the first time in the history of man, a universal religion was being proclaimed.

Samaria, through which He was passing, had, naturally, the first claim on the new enterprise, and that all the more from the proof of its need of spiritual light, furnished by the inhospitality shown to Him who was bringing that light to its borders.

The Seventy, separated into pairs, were detailed to carry the message of peace to all the habitations of the race they had formerly, as Jews, so hated. They had grown up from childhood in the narrowest Pharisaic spirit, and were still, in some measure, under its spell. The Rabbis did not permit any close intercourse of Jews with heathen or Samaritans; they were forbidden to enter their houses, or return their greetings, and, still more, to join them in a common meal. But the grand maxims of charity and love which Jesus had so often taught, were now to be put in practice. Jewish exclusiveness was to be done away for ever, by the proclamation of a SAVIOUR OF MANKIND. His messengers, therefore, while losing no time on the way by long and formal salutations, were to bear themselves with loving trust even among hostile populations, taking neither purse, nor wallet, and wearing only the sandals of the poor—to show their lowly bearing, and humble personal claims. The instructions given formerly to the Twelve, were, in fact, repeated; instructions then as amazing as if Hindoo Brahmins of to-day were sent forth with orders to care nothing for caste, and associate freely, and even eat, with abhorred Pariahs and Sudras. The Seventy were to join, without hesitation or reserve, in the household life of the hated Samaritans, and eat with them at their tables! No other condition of spiritual brotherhood was to be required than that of a believing reception of the salvation through Jesus.

Only one incident of the journey of Jesus Himself is recorded, but it is wondrously significant. His repulse at the border village had changed His route, for now, instead of going straight south, He turned eastwards, and followed the road that runs between Samaria and Galilee, down the ravines, to the fertile meadows of Bethshean or Scythopolis, where a ford or bridge led over the Jordan. The route stretched thence, southwards, to Jericho.

The calm rebuke of John and James for their anger and revengeful spirit, and the return of good for evil in the sending forth the Seventy to preach the Kingdom throughout the Samaritan region, had shown that the rudeness He had received had not ruffled His spirit. He was now to add another proof of His serene and loving nature. As they approached a border village, a dismal spectacle was presented. Ten men, hideous with leprosy, ranged themselves at a distance from the road, as similar sufferers still do, before their

huts at the Zion Gate at Jerusalem. It was a law in Samaria that no leper could enter a town, and hence the unfortunate creatures accosted Jesus while He was still outside the village. Misery had broken down all prejudice of race or faith, and had brought together even Jew and Samaritan, as it still does in the leper haunts of Jerusalem and Nablous. The ten had heard of Jesus, and the wonderful cures He had performed on such as they, and no sooner saw Him than they broke out with the common cry—"Tamé! Tamé! Unclean, unclean! Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." It was a sight that might have touched any heart, for it must have been like that which still repeats itself to passers-by at the leper quarters elsewhere—a crowd of beggars without eyebrows, or hair on their faces or heads, the nails of their hands and feet, and even a hand or a foot itself, gone from some; the nose, the eyes, the tongue, the palate, more or less wanting in others. As they stood afar off, their lips covered with their abbas, like mourners for the dead; for they were smitten with a living death, which cut them off from intercourse with their fellows; the pity of Jesus was excited, and without even waiting to come near, sent hope to them in the words, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." They knew what the command meant, for no one who was not cleansed could approach a priest, and as they moved off, the disease left them. The Samaritan would have to show himself to a Samaritan priest; the nine Jews needed to go up to Jerusalem for an official certificate of health, at the Temple; but it was the least either the one or the others could do, when they felt their cure, to return, if only for a moment, to thank their benefactor for a deliverance from worse than death. But the nine Jews were too much concentrated on themselves to think of this. Only one, the Samaritan, showed natural gratitude, and came back and threw himself at the feet of Jesus, in humble acknowledgment of the goodness shown him. "Were there not ten cleansed?" asked Christ; "where are the nine? The only one who has returned to give glory to God is this Samaritan, whom Jews call a heathen, and an alien from Israel. Arise, go thy way, thy faith hath made the whole." The Twelve had received another lesson of universal charity.

The Feast of Tabernacles was one of the three great feasts which every Jew was required to attend. It was held from the fifteenth of Tisri to the twenty-second, the first and last days being Sabbaths—the latter "the great day of the feast." It commemorated, in part, the tent-life of Israel in the wilderness, but was also, still more, a feast of thanks for the harvest, which was now ended even in the orchards and vineyards. Every one lived in booths of living twigs, branches of olive, myrtle, fir, and the like,—raised in the open courts of houses, on roofs, and in the streets and open places of the city. All carried in the left hand a citron, and in the right the lulab—a branch of palm woven round with willow and myrtle. On each of the seven feast days the priests went out with music and the choir of Levites,

amidst the shouts of vast multitudes, to draw water in a golden vessel, from the spring of Siloah; to be poured out at the time of the morning offering as a libation, on the west side of the great altar, amidst great joy, singing and dancing, such as was not all the year besides. On the evening of the first day a grand illumination, from huge candelabra which shed light far and near over the city, began in the Court of the Women, and torch dances of men were kept up, in the court, with music and songs, till the Temple gates closed.

The Jewish authorities kept looking for Jesus, for they had counted on His attending the great national holiday, and thus coming within their reach, but, to their disappointment, He appeared not to be in Jerusalem. So their officers reported. His absence had, indeed, been noted by the multitude, and everywhere He was the subject of conversation and discussion. The Rabbis and higher Temple dignitaries had shown themselves so hostile to Him that no one dared to mention His name except in whispers, for fear of excommunication, but He was more or less the one engrossing topic of the bazaars and the booths of the feast. Opinions were divided. Some, who judged for themselves, maintained that He was a good man, and that it would be well for all to follow what He taught: others, and they, no doubt the great majority, who took their opinions from their religious leaders, hotly and loudly denounced Him as unsafe and dangerous; a breaker of the Sabbath; for had He not, on His last visit, healed a blind man on the holy day?

Meanwhile, when the feast was at its height, Jesus suddenly made His appearance in the Temple porch, where the Rabbis taught, and, calmly taking His seat, began to teach the crowd that soon gathered round Him. It is not told us when He had arrived, or whether He lived for the week, like the crowds, in a succah or booth of His own, or of a friend: or whether He carried the lulab and citron, as others did, round the great altar, or attended only to the graver matters of His New Kingdom. We only know that He showed Himself openly in the city and in the Temple courts, under the very eyes of His enemies. Loyalty to His work had demanded His delay in coming, for His life was still needed to proclaim the New Kingdom in Jerusalem as well as in Galilee, if it were permitted Him. He had lived mostly in the latter, but Jerusalem was the religious centre of the nation, and all that happened, or was spoken publicly during one of the great feasts, would be wafted, like seeds, to every land. As a Jew, moreover, He had a tender love for the City of David, and of a still greater, His Heavenly Father—a spot dear then, as now, beyond expression, to every Israelite. Before it was for ever too late, He would fain bring its children to listen to the things of their peace, which He alone could tell them.

The Jewish authorities were astounded, and hardly knew what course to take. Coming, themselves, to listen to the fearless intruder, they were still more amazed at what they heard. They could now

understand how it had been said of Him that He bore Himself as one who had authority direct from God; and not like the Rabbis, who never spoke without quoting an authority; and how He had made so great a popular impression. Art and study of effect had no place in His discourses; for the copiousness and finish of a mere rhetorician were wanting. His resistless power lay as much in Himself as in His words: His calm dignity, and His look of mingled purity and tenderness, confirming all He said, as by a holy sanction. He did not merely treat of general religious and moral truths, but spoke of quickening facts and realities. The advent of the Kingdom of God, its nature, and its glorious future, but above all, His own position in it; as its Head and King, as He in whom the Father revealed Himself, and in whom men were to find salvation, were the substance of His addresses. They were, in fact, essentially a testimony respecting Himself, and a self-revelation. There were no sudden and violent bursts, no brilliant flashes, but an atmosphere of more than earthly peace rested over both speaker and words, from first to last. The most amazing claims were uttered, not only without a trace of self-consciousness, but with the lowliest humility. It seemed as if all He said was only what became Him.

But with all His humility, and in addition to His transcendent dignity, the fulness of His knowledge was no less remarkable. He was intimately familiar with all the sacred books, and even with the honoured extra-canonical writings. He met and confuted opinions of the Rabbis by the subtlest and most original references to Scripture; He pierced beneath its letter to the spirit; He distinguished with the keenest acuteness between the Law, as given by God, in its scope and essence, and the Pharisaic traditions; and He clothed in the simplest language, the profoundest spiritual truths of both the Law and the Prophets. Such a phenomenon was inexplicable.

The authorities, in amazement, could only ask themselves how He could have such learning, when He has never studied in the schools. Where could He have got this power of handling the Scriptures like a great Rabbi? He was a Galilæan, and had never attended any Teacher. Like the old prophets He must have been "taught of God," and it was evident that the people did not hesitate to recognize Him as one, though the official classes were fain to decry Him, and knew the effect of a harsh and contemptuous name. "How could a common man like this," said they, "who has never been educated as a Rabbi, possibly understand the Scriptures?" Against their consciences, they tried to depreciate both Him and His teaching.

Had they shown only curious or friendly wonder, Jesus would, perhaps, have remained silent. But it was different when they were trying to excite doubt and suspicion against Himself and His words, as it was clear they were doing from what He saw and heard. A deputation from the authorities having at last given the opportunity of reply by a direct interrogation, He seized it at once. "By-and-

doubt," said He, to paraphrase His words slightly, "I have not learned in your schools what I teach. But my doctrine is not a mere invention of my own: it is not mine at all, but His who has sent me. I only repeat what He instructs me to make known in His name. You speak as if religious truth were a mere matter of tedious study. But it is to be learned by obedience, rather than from books, as your own Wisdom of Sirach tells you, 'He that keepeth the law of the Lord getteth the understanding thereof.' It needs a heart willing to be taught of God to comprehend it; a heart at one with God, and eager to do His will, however contrary to one's own. He whose soul has no love of truth, no oneness with God, cannot recognize His truth even when he hears it. If you had true love to God and desired to know His revealed will, and to carry it out in your lives, you would know from whom I have received the doctrine I teach, by its power to purify and calm the heart, and by the hopes it gives for the world to come. That I do not advance a doctrine of my own invention is, moreover, clear from this, that if I did so I should seek my own honour and advantage. But if I seek no honour for myself, but only for Him by whom I have been sent, it shows that I am worthy of trust. To strive only for the glory of God is in itself a proof of being His true mouthpiece and messenger, and I leave you to say whether this does not apply to me. Have I ever sought honour from men and not rather the honour of my Father alone? Have I not always professed to have received all from my Father? I have had no personal end, and it is, therefore, incredible that I should be a deceiver, seeking to lead men astray."

The cavil of the Rabbis thus answered, Jesus forthwith took the offensive. "How charge me," said He, "with not *knowing* the Law: you do not *keep it*. You boast of your zeal for it, and affect indignation for my having, as you assert, broken it by healing a blind man on the Sabbath; an indignation so real that you would put me to death if you could. But this, itself, is a violation of the Law, for the Law commands love to our neighbour above even the Sabbath, and that should be my perfect defence." He knew that the authorities had never forgiven Him His answer, at His former visit, to their charge of having broken the Sabbath by the miracle at the pool of Bethesda, and that they were plotting His death, even now, on account of it.

Meanwhile, the crowd, perhaps knowing less than He of the secret designs of the hierarchy, or affecting to deny them; believed, or feigned to believe Him in no danger, and broke out in angry repudiation of such a charge. They had heard the Rabbis often ascribe His works to Beelzebub, and fell back on the blasphemous slander as an explanation of His language. He must have a devil. The Rabbis were right. He was crazed. The evil spirit that spoke through Him was trying to stir them up against their spiritual guides.

Without noticing the interruption, Jesus continued, addressing the

crowd at large, "Your leaders are plotting to kill me for doing an act of mercy on the Sabbath. But all of you are in a measure guilty by your sympathy with them; shown in your unrighteous anger at me on account of it, on the same ground. But that you may see the injustice of your charge, let me remind you of what often takes place in regard to circumcision. That rite was commanded by Moses, though it dates from Abraham, and you are so strict in performing it at the prescribed time, the eighth day, that you circumcise a child even on the Sabbath, if necessary, that the law of Moses in this particular be not broken. Do you think the Sabbath was first given on Sinai, and hence give the older law of circumcision the preference? Or have you, of your own accord, decided that in some cases the law of the Sabbath must give way to other parts of the law? You accept the saying of the Rabbis, that 'circumcision drives away the Sabbath.' But, if you perform circumcision, with all the work it involves, on the Sabbath, without breaking the day, how can you be angry at me, if I broke it by a work of mercy so much more beneficial to its object as the making a blind man whole on it? Never judge by appearance, but look beneath the surface and judge righteously."

But now some joined the crowd who knew of the plots of the authorities against His life, and could not understand how He should be allowed to teach thus openly without interference. His words and bearing had softened their prejudice, and made it seem possible that the authorities had become convinced that He was, in reality, the Messiah, and sanctioned this course. But the mere suggestion, in the shape of a question, was enough to raise a hot dispute among theologians so keen. "Do not the Rabbis tell us," said some, "that the Messiah will be born at Bethlehem, but that He will be snatched away by spirits and tempests soon after His birth, and that when He returns the second time no one will know from whence He has come? But we know that this man comes from Nazareth. Our chief men, if they choose, may accept Him as the Messiah; we will not."

Jesus was still sitting in the Temple porch, teaching, but, on hearing what was thus openly said in disparagement of His Messiahship, He broke off His discourse, and called out in a louder voice than He had hitherto used, to the noisy disputants—"You do certainly, in your own sense, know who I am, and whence I come, but in a higher sense you know neither. I come forward as the Messiah, not of myself; I am sent by One whom you cannot truly know, so long as you cling to your worldly ideas of the Messiah—by One who, alone, has the right and power to send forth the Messiah, and has done so in sending me. I know Him, though you do not, for I have come forth from Him, and no other than He has sent me."

His hearers at once saw what was implied in this. It was no less than a claim to have come forth from God, and was equivalent to asserting divine dignity, for He said nothing of being only an angel, or embodied heavenly spirit, or prophet raised from the dead. He had

once be ore, after the very miracle for which He had been so assailed, justified Himself by saying—"My Father worketh hitherto, and I work;" and the words had sounded so blasphemous, that the authorities had sought to kill Him, because He had not only broken the Sabbath, but had said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. The hostile part of the crowd rightly saw a similar claim repeated now, and with the wild fanaticism of their race in that age, proposed to lay hold of Him, and hurry Him outside the city on the instant, to stone Him, as the Law against blasphemy enjoined. But His hour had not yet come, and whether from fear of the Galilæans at the feast, or from other reasons, their rage died away in words.

The fame of His miracles in the north had preceded Him to Jerusalem, and was, now, further spread by the reports of the Galilæan pilgrims, and deepened the effect of His cure of the blind man at His last visit—the very bitterness of His enemies having kept it from being forgotten. Numbers had thus been impressed in His favour, even before His appearance at the feast, and not a few of these were now so far won over by the still higher evidence of His wondrous words, and whole air and bearing, that many felt constrained to admit His claim to be the Messiah. Miracles had always been held a characteristic of the Messiah's advent, and even the bitterest enemies of Jesus did not deny His supernatural power. It was evident that He was rapidly gaining ground, and the hierarchy knew that if He rose they must fall. If they could arrest Him, while His adherents had not as yet ventured on an open movement in His support, all might be well. The Pharisees, therefore, and the Sadducean chief priests—mortal enemies at all other times—hastily issued a warrant to apprehend Him, and sent some of the Temple police to carry it out.

The sight of the well-known dress of these officials, on the outskirts of His audience, told the whole story to the quick intelligence of Jesus, and with that readiness which always marked Him, He, forthwith, began a calm and clear anticipation of His near death.

"I shall be with you," said He, "only a short time longer, for I shall soon return to my Father in Heaven, who sent me. Then the days will come when sore distress will fall upon this city and land for rejecting me, and you will seek help and deliverance from the Messiah, that is, from me, but ye will not find me then. Persecuted and put to death now, ye will then long for me in vain, when for ever gone from you, for where I shall then be you cannot go, to fetch me from thence as your Saviour."

"What does He mean?" asked those round; "will He go to our Greek speaking brethren—the Hellenists in Egypt, or Asia Minor, or some other of the lands of the Gentiles?"

The day passed without any attempt to apprehend Him, nor was He disturbed again during the week. The last day of the Feast, known as "the Hosanna Rabba," and the "Great Day," found Him, as each day before, doubtless, had done, in the Temple arcades. He

had gone thither early, to meet the crowds assembled for morning prayer. It was a day of special rejoicing. A great procession of pilgrims marched seven times round the city, with their lulabs, music, and loud-voiced choirs preceding, and the air was rent with shouts of Hosanna, in commemoration of the taking of Jericho, the first city in the Holy Land that fell into the hands of their Fathers. Other multitudes streamed to the brook of Siloah, after the priests and Levites, bearing the golden vessels, with which to draw some of the water. As many as could get near the stream drank of it amidst loud chanting of the words of Isaiah—"Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," "With joy shall we draw water from the wells of salvation,"—rising in jubilant chants on every side. The water drawn by the priests, was, meanwhile, borne up to the Temple, amidst the boundless excitement of a vast throng. Such a crowd was, apparently, passing at this moment.

Rising, as the throng went by, His Spirit was moved at such honest enthusiasm, yet saddened at the moral decay which mistook a mere ceremony for religion. It was burning autumn weather, when the sun had for months shone in a cloudless sky, and the early rains were longed for as the monsoons in India after the summer heat. Water at all times is a magic word in a sultry climate like Palestine, but at this moment it had a double power. Standing, therefore, to give His words more solemnity, His voice now sounded far and near over the throng, with soft clearness, which arrested all :—

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink, for I will give him the living waters of God's heavenly grace, of which the water you have now drawn from Siloah is only, as your Rabbis tell you, a type. He that believes in me drinks into his soul from my fulness, as from a fountain, the riches of divine grace and truth. Nor do they bring life to him alone who thus drinks. They become in his own heart, as the whole burden of Scripture tells, a living spring, which shall flow forth from his lips and life in holy words and deeds, quickening the thirsty around him." He meant, adds St. John, that this quickening missionary zeal and power would first show itself after the descent of the Holy Spirit, when He Himself had entered on His glory. Streams of holy influence, like rivers of living water, would go forth from His Apostles through the Spirit's overflowing fulness in their souls.

The whole discourse was now ended. The impressions it had left were various. Many who had listened to it, whispered to their neighbours that they were sure "This was the Prophet to come before the Messiah." Others maintained He was the Messiah Himself, but this opinion led to hot dispute. "Does the Messiah, then, come out of Nazareth?" asked the incredulous Rabbinists. "Does not the Scripture say that the Christ comes of the seed of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" But the division in the crowd was the safety of Jesus, for those who were fiercest to lay hands

on Him as a blasphemer and Sabbath-breaker were afraid to do so, so strong did the party seem which supported Him.

The Temple police sent to arrest Him had remained near, to the close, to watch their opportunity. But the power and majesty of His discourse, which had spell-bound so many others, had overawed and impressed even them, so that they dared not touch Him, and went back to their masters empty-handed. To the angry demand for an explanation, they could only answer, "Never man spake as this man speaks." The Pharisees in the Council—the special guardians of the public orthodoxy—professed themselves shocked at such disloyalty on the part of men entrusted with the commission of the high ecclesiastical court. "How can you be so led away? Do you not see that only some of the ignorant rabble believe in Him? Have any men of position—any members of the Council, or any Rabbis—done so? They are qualified to judge on such matters; but as for the rabble, who have accepted such a transgressor as the Messiah, it shows that they do not know the Law, and are therefore accursed of God."

One faint voice only was heard in the Council in hesitating defence of Jesus. It was that of Nicodemus—His visitor by night on His first appearance. "I know, sirs, you are zealous for the Law, and rightly condemn those who are ignorant of it. But does the Law sanction our thus condemning a man before it has heard him, and found exactly what he has done?" He had not moral courage to take a side, but could not withhold a timid word. Like all weak men, he found little favour for his faint-hearted caution. "Are you, also, like Jesus, out of Galilee," they asked, "that you believe in Him; only ignorant Galilæans do so? Search the Scriptures, and you will see that no Galilæan was ever inspired as a prophet by God: the race is despised of the Highest, and is it likely it should give Jerusalem the Messiah?"

In their blind rage they forgot that, at least, Jonah, and Hosea, and Nahum, were Galilæans, and they ignored the fact that if the followers of Jesus were mostly from the illiterate north, He had also not a few even from the sons of bigoted Jerusalem.

CHAPTER L.

AFTER THE FEAST.

All who attended the Feast of Tabernacles were required to sleep in the city the first night at least, but were free afterwards to go any distance outside, within the limit of a Sabbath day's journey. Jesus, accustomed to the pure air of the hills and open country, and with little sympathy for the noise and merriment, or for the crowds and confusion, of the great holiday, was glad to avail Himself of this freedom, and went out, each night, after leaving the Temple, to seek sleep in the house of some friend on the Mount of Olives; perhaps to that of the family of Bethany, of which we hear so much soon after this. The early morning, however, saw Him always at His post in the Temple courts; now in the royal porch; now in the court of the women, through which the men passed to their own.

The vast concourse of people from all countries, and the general excitement and relaxation of the season, had gradually led to abuses. Pilgrimages, in all ages, have had an indifferent name for their influence on morals, and the yearly feasts at Jerusalem were likely no exception.

A large number of people had already gathered round Jesus, when a commotion was seen in the women's court, where He had sat down to teach. A woman of the humbler class had been guilty of immorality, and the Scribes, on the moment, saw in her sin a possible snare for the hated Galilæan. It was not their business, but that of her husband, to accuse her; nor could she be legally punished, except by divorce, if he, himself, were not a man of pure life. It was the custom, however, in cases of difficulty, to consult a famous Rabbi, and advantage was taken of this, to entrap Jesus, if possible, by asking Him to adjudicate on the case. If He condemned her, and insisted that she should be stoned to death, it would injure Him in the eyes of the people, for the Law, in this particular, had long been obsolete, from the very commonness of the offence. If, on the other hand, He simply dismissed her, they could charge Him with slighting the Law, for it was still formally binding. To condemn her to death, would, moreover, bring Him under the Roman law, as an invasion of the right of the governor.

Leading forward their trembling prisoner—unveiled, and exposed before the crowd of men—the bitterest degradation to an Eastern woman—they set her before Jesus, and asked with feigned humility—

"Teacher, this woman has been guilty of sin. Now Moses, in the Law, charged us that such should be stoned. What is your opinion?"

Knowing their smooth dissimulation, He instinctively felt that this

mock respect was a mere cloak for sinister designs. Yet the incident threw Him into a moment's confusion. His soul shrank from the spectacle thus brought before Him, and in His stainless purity He could not bear to look on the fallen one. Stooping down, therefore, at once to hide the blush He could not prevent, and to show that He would have nothing to do with such a matter, He began to write on the dust before Him—most likely the very words He was presently to utter. Had they chosen to read them, they might have spared themselves the open exposure that followed. But they were too occupied with their plot to read the warning, and again and again repeated the question, to force Him to answer. At last, raising His face for a moment and looking straight at them, He said—

"Let him, among you, who is free from sin of a like kind, cast the first stone at her, as is required of the chief witness, by Moses."

It was an age of deep immorality, and the words of Jesus went to their consciences. He had again stooped and begun to write, as soon as He had spoken, perhaps to remind them how sin, when followed by penitence, is effaced for ever, like characters written in dust. Meanwhile, their own bosoms became their judges. One after another, beginning at the oldest among them, moved off, to the very last, and Jesus was left alone, with the woman, in the midst of the crowd.

Rising once more, and finding only the woman left, He asked her—

"Woman, where are thine accusers? Did no one condemn thee, by casting a stone at thee?"

"No one, Lord."

"Neither," said He, "shall I. I come not to condemn, but to save. I am no criminal judge, either to sentence or acquit. Go, repent of thy guilt, and sin no more."

His enemies had often murmured at the pity and favour He had shown to the fallen and outcast. They knew how He had let one sinful woman wash His feet with her tears, and wipe them with her loose hair; how He had eaten with publicans and sinners, and how He even had a publican among His disciples. They had hoped to use all this against Him, but, once more, their schemes had only turned to their own shame. He had given no opinion for the obsolete law, or against it: their own consciences had set the offender free.

This incident past, He began His discourse again to those round Him. He still sat in the court of the women, or, as it was sometimes called, "the treasury," from the thirteen brazen chests for offerings, with their trumpet-like mouths, opening through the wall of its buildings. The court was the great thoroughfare to that of the Israelites, which was reached from it by the fifteen steps leading to the great gate.

In the address of the day before, He had spoken of Himself as alone having the water of life for the thirst of the soul. "To give water

to drink," was a common phrase for teaching and explaining the Law, and hence its meaning, when used by our Lord, was familiar to all His hearers. Water, in such a climate, was the first necessary of life, and flowing, or living, waters pictured, at once, every image of joy and prosperity. But the mighty light, filling the heavens—the first-born creation of God—lifts the thoughts from individual benefit to that of the whole race, for light is the condition and source of all else, alike to nature and man. It was the characteristic of Jesus to make everything round Him, in creation or common life, His texts and illustrations. The shouts of the multitude, as they brought up the golden vessel of water from Siloam, had introduced the discourse on the living waters. Round the court in which He now sat, rose the great candelabra, in whose huge cups the illuminations of the feasts were kindled, that banished night from the city, and in whose brightness the multitudes found darkness changed to day, and these He now used as a text.

Pointing to them, and, from them, to the glorious sun, just risen over the Mount of Olives, and shining with dazzling splendour on the white houses of the city and the marble and gold of the Temple walls and gates, He began a new discourse, in language, which, from the lips of a Jew, was a direct claim to be the Messiah.

"I am the Light of the World," said He—"that is,,of the whole race of man!" Such words from One who was humility itself—One acknowledged by all to have unbounded supernatural power at His command, yet so self-restrained that He neves used it for His own advantage, and was so unassuming and lowly that even the weakest and poorest felt perfectly free to approach Him—were uttered with a calm dignity which vouched their truth. "In me dwells divine truth," He continued, "and from me it shines forth, like the light, to all mankind. He who becomes my true disciple, and follows me sincerely, will no longer walk in the darkness of ignorance and sin, which is the death of the soul, but in the light of everlasting life, given to the children of the Messiah's kingdom."

Some partisans of the Rabbinical party, who remained to watch Him, listened with eager attention to every word. Enraged at the failure of the last attempt to entrap him, what they had now heard, which was far beyond what any prophet had ever claimed for himself, deepened their bitterness.

"You make yourself judge in your own favour," said they. "You require us to believe you, on your own word. It is too much to ask. A man's witness on his own behalf is worthless."

"I do not make myself witness in my own favour," replied Jesus. "Your rule does not apply to me, for I speak not for myself alone, but as the mouthpiece of Him from whom I came, and to whom I shall soon return. If you knew who He was, you would be forced to receive His testimony to me. But you do not know Him, and therefore you reject it, for you know neither whence I came nor whither

I shall return. I know, and must know, best, whose messenger I am, and what commission He has given me. You have no right to accuse me as a deceiver, for you are not in a position to judge of me, since you know nothing of my mission. You look at me with jaundiced eyes, and judge only by my lowly, outward appearance, and are thus misled. I, by myself, judge neither in my own favour, nor against any one, for I have come not to condemn, but to save. If, indeed, in any case, I seem to judge, as in this instance respecting my commission, it is not I, alone, who do so, but I and my Father who has sent me judge together, and thus the judgment must be true. I am not alone; the Father who sent me is with me, and thus, even by your own Law, by which the testimony of two *men* is received as true, that which I offer for myself is more than sufficient, for I offer you my own word, and no one can convict me of untruthfulness, and also the witness of my Father. He witnesses for me by the very truths I utter, and by the miracles you admit I perform."

"Where is, then, this second witness, Thy Father?" retorted His adversaries. "We do not see Him. He must be here, if, as you say, He is a witness for you?" He had too often spoken of God as His Father to permit of any mistake as to His meaning, but they affected to misunderstand Him. With perfect calmness, Jesus replied, "You ask who is my Father, and do not know me, myself. I cannot answer you till you have juster conceptions of me. If you looked at me, my teaching, and my deeds, in a right light, you would know who my Father is, for He reveals Himself in me. But your hearts are now so prejudiced, that you would not understand what I might tell you, either of myself or of Him, were I to attempt it."

These were bold words in such a place; the very stronghold of His enemies; but as He finished and rose to depart, no one laid hands on Him. His hour was not yet come.

A fragment of another discourse delivered like this in the Temple, on one of the following days, has been preserved. The immediate circumstances preceding are not recorded, but there must have been another dispute with His enemies. A fresh attempt to win them, followed; with solemn warnings of the results of their finally rejecting Him.

"The time approaches," said He, in effect, "when I shall leave you, and when I am gone you will seek me, that is, you will cry out for the Messiah, but in vain, and will look for Him without success; you will fain be delivered from the calamities that will come on you; but you will die, unpardoned and unsanctified, with your sins on your souls,—die here, and die for ever; for your seeking me, that is, the Messiah, will not be from faith and repentance, but only a despairing cry for deliverance from temporal distress. You cannot hope to be able to go up to heaven, to find and bring me down as your Saviour. I shall be gone from you forever."

"Will He kill Himself?" asked one of the bitterest among the by-

standers, with blasphemous irony. "In that case, certainly, we shall not be able to follow Him, or willing, either, to where *He* will go!"

Taking no notice of the coarse insulting jest, Jesus went on to point out, calmly, and with surpassing dignity, that they spake as they did only because they could not comprehend Him or His sayings, coming as He did from above. "You spring from the earth, I from heaven; your natures and hearts, in keeping with your origin, are without the higher wisdom and divine life of those who are born of God. You have the thoughts and ideas of this age: I speak those of the New Kingdom of God. It was on this ground I said to you, that you would die in your sins, for only faith in me, as the Messiah, can raise those who are not born from above, gross fleshly souls, born only of the flesh, to higher divine life, in time and eternity. If you do not believe that I am He, you shall certainly die in your sins."

"I am He," was the sum of Jehovah's self-proclamation in the Old Testament, and it was now repeated, in its lofty majesty, by Jesus, of His own Messianic dignity. He could assume that the question of the Messiah was the ever-present and supreme thought of all His hearers. The one point was whether He, or another yet to come, were the Expected One.

The Rabbinists perfectly understood Him, but would not acknowledge that they did so, and asked Him contemptuously, "Who art Thou, then?"

"I am what I have said from the beginning of my ministry I was,—how can you still ask? I have much to say respecting you, much especially to blame; but I refrain, and confine myself to my immediate mission,—to proclaim to mankind what I have received from Him who sent me." Strange as it might seem, though He had used similar terms so often that the allusion to God was generally recognized at once, His hearers did not in this instance understand Him.

Seeing their hesitation, He continued,—"Had you acknowledged me as the Messiah, you would have understood what I have said of my Father. But when you have crucified me, you will know that I am He, and that I never act alone, but speak only what I have heard from my Father, before I came into the world. My glory, which will be revealed after I die, will force you to realize this." He referred to the future descent of the Holy Spirit after His resurrection,—the miracles of the Apostles, the spread of His kingdom, the judgment of God on the nation, and His final return in the clouds of heaven at the last day. "My Father who sent me," He continued, "has not left me alone, though you do not see Him, but have before you only a lowly man, in the midst of enemies; He is ever with me, for I do always the things that please Him."

These lofty words must have been wondrously borne out by His whole air, and by the calm truth and heavenliness of His tone and looks; for, instead of revolting His hearers by the contradiction between

claims so awful, and Him who made them, which we instinctively feel there must have been, had they been uttered by sinful men like ourselves, they won many to believe in Him, there and then, as the Messiah.

It is impossible not to feel that such words were a distinct claim of absolute sinlessness, on which no mere man could for a moment venture. Yet in His mouth they seemed only the fitting expression of evident truth. Nor is it possible to exaggerate their importance. When we remember how entirely His whole life was devoted to the enforcement of the purest morals even in the domain of thought and conscience, they acquire a significance that awes the mind. Such an absolute purity implied the keenest discrimination between good and evil, holiness and sin. "To please God," was with Him no empty phrase, but implied a divine holiness in the very fountains of being; pure as the light of a morning without clouds. Yet His language respecting Himself was always the same. The greatest saints are most ready to bewail their unworthiness, but He never for a moment humbles Himself before God for sin; never asks pardon for it; and not only makes no approach to expressing a sense of needing repentance and forgiveness, but calmly takes on Himself the divine prerogative of forgiving the sins of men. The Ideal of humility, and truth, and holy life, He must have known His own spiritual state with exact fidelity, for the passing of even an unworthy thought over such a soul, would have instantly clouded its peace and joy. Yet, with this perfect self-knowledge, He could calmly claim that His Father saw in Him only His own image of perfect holiness, which alone can please Him.

The overpowering impression produced on His hearers, was, however, too sudden and superficial for permanence.

Resuming His discourse, therefore, He continued,—addressing those who, for the moment, in spite of themselves, believed on Him, —"If your present professions be deep and lasting, and you continue permanently in the same mind; acknowledging me as the Messiah, and carrying out my teaching in your hearts and lives, you will be my disciples indeed. You will then, by experience, know the power and worth of the divine truths of my Person and teaching, for my words are the truth, and the truth will make you free."

He spoke, of course, of spiritual freedom; of emancipation from a sinful life by the elevating and purifying influence of their new faith; but, like Nicodemus with the new birth, or the Samaritan woman with the living water, or the Twelve with the leaven of the Pharisees, they understood the word only of political liberty, and in a moment showed how little they understood their new Master's spirit. Their fierce Jewish pride was instantly in a blaze.

"Free! what do you mean?" said they. "We are the descendants of Abraham; the race to whom God gave the promise of being the first of nations—His chosen people. We have never been in bondage

to any. What do you mean?" They conveniently forgot the episodes of Egypt and Babylon, and thought of the shadow of political liberty they enjoyed under the prudent Romans, by the retention of their own laws, as in the protected States of India under Britain. It was an offence punishable with excommunication for one Jew to call another a slave, and part of their morning prayer, even when under a foreign yoke, ran thus—Blessed be the Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has made me a free man."

But Jesus answered—"With all earnestness, let me tell you that every one who commits sin is under the power of sin—a slave under that of his master. I speak of spiritual liberty, not of political. You have need of the help I can and will give you, if you desire to free yourself from this moral slavery—the bondage to your own sinful inclinations and habits. You are slaves in the great household of God, not sons, and the slave has no claim to remain always in the household: it is in the power of his lord to sell him to another, or to put him out, when he pleases. All men, whether Jews or others, are sinners, and as such, slaves of their sin, and must be made free, before they can claim, as you do, to belong of right to the household of God. He will not treat the slaves of sin as His sons, but will turn them out of His kingdom as a lord drives out an unworthy slave. But I, the Son of God, abide in God's household, as His Son, for ever, and, hence, if, by the truth I proclaim, and the grace I secure you, I free you from slavery to sin, you will be really free; not outwardly only, and in name, as now. Were I not to be always, as His Son, in the household of God, my Father—you might doubt my power, or fear because of my absence; but my presence there for ever gives you perfect security that the freedom I offer will be real and abiding. I know that you are descended from Abraham, but it is only in a bodily sense. If you were his spiritual sons, you would believe in me; but, now, in spite of your passing belief, I see that you have turned against me already, and gone back to those who would kill me. Need I say that you act thus only because my teaching had no real hold on your hearts? I have told you what I have seen when I was still with my Father; but you act according to the teaching of *your* father."

"Our father," interrupted some, "Is Abraham,"—for they saw that He meant something else. "If ye were in the true sense," replied Jesus—"not in mere outward descent—the sons of Abraham, you would imitate Abraham; to do so is the only descent from him of worth before God. But you seek to kill me—a man who has spoken to you the truth, which I have received from God for your good: because it humbles your pride and self-righteousness. Abraham would never have acted thus. He received and rejoiced in the truth as revealed to him, though it was far less clear than my words have made it to you. The fact is, I repeat, with unutterable sadness, you act as your father teaches you."

"What do you mean?" cried out a number at a time. "You say that Abraham is not our father—who is our father, then? Do you mean that Sarah, our mother, was unfaithful to Abraham, and that he was only in name our father, not in fact? We have only *one* father, not *two*, as they have who are born from adultery, and if you deny it is *Abraham*, it must be *God*."

"If God were your father, you would love ME," quietly replied Jesus, "for I am the Very Son of God, proceeding, in my Being, from Him, and descending from heaven to mankind. I have not come from any personal and private act of my own, but as the Messiah sent forth by the Father. You cannot understand what I say, because your hearts are so gross that you have no ears for my teaching: it is dark to you because you are morally blind. So far from being the spiritual children of Abraham, far less of God, you are children of the devil; and, true to your nature, ye copy your father. From the beginning of the human race he was a murderer, and put away the truth from him, because there is no truth in him. The devil is a liar by nature, and lives in lies, and knows nothing, in his heart, of truth, and his children are liars like their father—that is, they thrust away the truth from them, as you are doing now.

"Because I speak the truth, and do not seek, like Satan, to win you to evil, by flattering your self-deception and sins, you do not believe me. Yet, would I deceive you? Who of you can convict me of sin? But if I be sinless, I can have no untruthfulness—no lie—in me, and, therefore, what I speak must be truth and truth only. Hence I am right in saying you cannot be the children of God, for he that is of God hears God's words—that is, hears me, for I speak the words of God. That you are not really the children of God, though you call yourselves such, explains why you do not believe in me."

"That proves what we said of you," interrupted some of the crowd. "Such language about your own nation shows that we were right in saying that you were a Samaritan—an enemy of the true people of God, and possessed with a devil."

"I have not a devil," replied Jesus; "I honour my Father by these very words, for they tend to the glory of God. As He has taught me, so I teach you, when I say that the wicked are servants and children of the devil. Yet, though I speak not from my own authority, but that of God, you do me, His messenger, the great dishonour of saying I have a devil. But I shall not attempt to refute the slander, for I care nothing for either your approval or praise. There is one here—my Father—who cares for my honour, and will judge those who contemn me. Would that none of you expose yourselves to His wrath! May you rather receive from Him life eternal! Once more, let me repeat, He that believes in me, and obeys my words, shall never taste death."

As usual, the hearers put a material sense on these words, and un-

derstood them of natural death; taking it as a proof of their assertion that He had a devil—that He could promise any one that he should never die. "Even Abraham died," they continued, "and so did the prophets. Whom do you make yourself? You put yourself above all men, even the greatest. Abraham could not ward off death, nor could the prophets. Do you claim to be greater than they?"

"If I, for mere desire of glory," replied Jesus, "were to boast of being greater than Abraham, such glory would be idle. If what I have said tends to exalt me, it is not I who honour myself, but my Father, by whose authority I act and speak that honours me—my Father, of whom you say He is your God. If you fail to see how He constantly does so, it is because, in spite of your calling yourselves His people, you have not known Him. But I know Him, as only His Son can. If I were to say that I did not know Him, and speak His Words, I should be like yourselves, untruthful; but I both know Him, and keep all His commands, for my whole life is obedience to Him.

"But that you may know that I really am greater than even Abraham —the Friend of God—let me tell you that Abraham, when he received, with such joy, the promise that the Messiah should come from his race, and bless all nations, was rejoicing that he would, hereafter, from Heaven, see my day, and he *has* seen my appearing, from his abode in Paradise, and exulted at it."

The crowd, gross as usual, understood these words of Abraham's earthly life, and fancied that Jesus was now claiming to have been alive so long ago as the time of Abraham, and to have known him.

"It is two thousand years ago since Abraham's day," broke in a voice, "and you are not fifty years old yet; do you mean to say you have seen Abraham?"

"I mean to say," replied Jesus, "far more than even that. Let me tell you, with the utmost solemnity,—before Abraham was born, I AM."

This was the very phrase in which Jehovah had announced Himself to Isreal in Egypt. It implied a continuous existence from the beginning, as if the speaker had claimed to be, Himself, the Uncreated Eternal. Abraham had come into being, but HE had existence in Himself, without a beginning.

His hearers instantly took it in this august meaning, and Jesus, the Truth, made no attempt, then or afterwards, to undeceive them. Utterly turned against Him, they rushed hither and thither, in wild fanaticism, for stones, with which to put Him to death as a blasphemer. Many of those used in the building of parts of the Temple, still incomplete, lay in piles at different parts. But Jesus hid Himself among the crowd, some of whom were less hostile, and, in the confusion, passed out of the sacred precincts, to safety.

CHAPTER LI.

THE LAST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

Prudence demanded that Jesus should for a time withdraw from Jerusalem after the outbreak of murderous fanaticism in the Temple courts, and He would be the more inclined to this because Judea had, as yet, had so small a share in His ministry. The unmeasured religious pride which had resisted any impression in His first lengthened visit, might possibly yield, in some cases, after the incidents of His work in Galilee and Jerusalem, and doubtless did so; perhaps, in more instances than we suspect. But whatever the success, He could not leave the special home-land of Israel without one more attempt to win it to the New Kingdom of God. Hence the next months, till after the Feast of Dedication, in December, were spent either in Jerusalem or Judea.

In these last weeks of His life Jesus found a home, from time to time, in the bosom of a village family in Bethany, on the east side of the Mount of Olives. When He first came to know them is not told: perhaps they were among the few fruits of His former sojourn in Judea; possibly the family of him who is known in the Gospels as Simon the Leper; one of the converts of the early Judean labours, in gratitude for his miraculous cure. Bethany is easily reached from Jerusalem. The flight of steps on the east side of the Temple, before the Golden Gate, led to the quiet valley of the Kedron. A bridge over the sometimes dry channel of the stream opened into a camel path, rising, past Gethsemane, in a slow and gentle ascent over the brow of the hill which lies between the Mount of Olives and that which Pompey had defiled by his camp; called, from this, the Hill of Offence. To save distance, however, a footway ran from Gethsemane over the top of Olivet, and this, travellers a-foot, like Jesus, for the most part preferred to the other easier but more circuitous road. Descending the eastern slope, a few steps led from the bare hill-side, with its scattered, prickly shrubs, to a sweet dell, rich in fig, almond, and olive trees, through which wound a road, here and there cut out in the side of the hill. Ascending the east end of the dell, Bethany lay close in sight, only three-quarters of an hour's distance from Jerusalem, but hidden from it by a spur of the Mount of Olives. The ruins of a tower rise, now, over the highest point of the village, but they are of later date than the days of our Lord. The houses, white-washed and flat-roofed, lie hidden among the surrounding heights, amidst green fields and trees of many kinds; all the more charming, as the eastern side of Mount Olivet, the background to the picture, is much more barren and dreary than the western.

In this sequestered spot, on the edge of the great wilderness of

Judea, Jesus found a delightful retreat in the vine-covered cottage of Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Loving and beloved, it always offered a peaceful retirement from the confusion and danger of the Temple courts, or the still more exhausting circuits of His wider southern journeys. It was the one spot, so far as we know, that He could call home in these last months, but it was apparently the sweetest, and most like home, He had ever had.

The household consisted of two sisters, and a brother—Martha, Mary, and Lazarus—names which mark the transition-character of the times; for, while "Martha" was the unchanged native equivalent of "lady," "Mary" and "Lazarus" were Greek forms of the old Hebrew "Miriam" and "Eleazer." May we trace, in this superiority to narrow conservatism, a liberality in their parents, which led both them and their children to receive the Galilæan teacher so readily and so fondly? They had evidently been disciples before this last stay in Judea; likely from the time of their now dead father, who had, doubtless, often talked over his doubts or reasons for loving trust, in their company.

Martha appears to have been the head of the little household, and may have been, as many have believed, a widow. The family seems to have had a good social position, and to have been above the average in circumstances. The character of the two sisters shows itself vividly in the first notice. Martha shares the piety of her sister, but fails, at first, to rise to such a high conception of the nature and dignity of their wondrous Friend as her sister, and is busied with the practical cares of life to an extent that seems to Him excessive. Amiably anxious for the comfort of her guest, she is absorbed in every detail of hospitality which she thinks likely to please Him, while Mary sits at His feet, to listen to His words and watch His every look. The busy, motherly Martha, seeing Mary thus seemingly idle, feels a passing jealousy and annoyance, unworthy of her calmer self—for a word to her sister would doubtless have been enough—and comes impatiently with a complaint to Jesus, not free from irreverence. "Lord," says she, "do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work alone? If *you* speak to her, she will help me." As if to imply that she would pay no attention to Martha's words.

The gentle calmness of Jesus, too grateful to both for their loving tenderness to overlook the good in each, had only the tenderest reply. "Martha, Martha," said He, "my wants are easily satisfied, and it is, besides, better, like Mary, to choose the one thing needful above all—supreme concern for the things of God—for they alone can never be taken from us." Of Lazarus, before his death, we only know that his spirit and temper were such that Jesus made him, in an especial manner, His friend.

An incident of this period is preserved by St. Luke. In one of our Lord's journeys in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, a Rabbi, skilled in the Mosaic Law; and, as such, a public teacher and interpreter of

the Rabbinical rules, rising from his seat among his students, as Jesus passed, resolved to show his wisdom at the expense of the hated Galilæan; and trap Him, if possible, into some doubtful utterance. "Teacher," asked he, "what shall I do to inherit eternal life? We know what the Rabbis enjoin, but what sayest Thou?"

"What is written in the Law?" replied Jesus, "how readest thou? For the law of God alone can determine such a matter."

Quoting a passage which every Jew repeated in each morning and evening's prayer, and wore in the little text-boxes of his phylactery, he answered glibly, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself."

"You are quite right," said Jesus. "Do this, and you shall live."

The answer hardly left room for anything further; but the questioner would not be balked of an opportunity of showing his acuteness, and, perhaps, of drawing Jesus into a difficulty. No command was so plain as not to furnish subjects for dispute to hair-splitting theologians of his class; and, in this case, there had been endless wrangling in the Rabbinical schools on the definition of the word "neighbour." Jesus, moreover, as was well-known, held very broad views on the subject; views utterly heterodox in the eyes of the schools. Determined not to let conversation drop, the questioner, therefore, opened it afresh.

"But you have not told me," said he, "who is my neighbour. Pray do so, else I may fail in my duty."

Instead of answering him directly, Jesus replied, in the fashion of the Rabbis themselves, by a parable, which I amplify, for its clearer understanding.

"A certain man," said He, "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. You know the way, so steep, wild, and dangerous; well called the Bloody Road, for who can tell how many robberies and murders have happened on it in these unsettled times, when the country is full of men driven from their homes by oppression and misery? As he went on, a band of robbers from the wild gorges through which the road sinks, rushed out upon him; stripped him, for he was a poor man, with only his clothes to take from him; beat him when he resisted; and then made off, leaving him half dead.

"As he lay, bleeding, insensible, and naked, on the rough stones, a priest, who lived at Jericho, like so many more, and had finished his course at the Temple, went past. He was busy reading the copy of the Law, which all priests carry with them; but as he came near and saw the wounded and seemingly dying man, he hastily crossed over, and passed, on the other side of the road, afraid of defiling himself by blood, or by the touch of one perhaps unclean.

"Soon after, a Levite, also from the Temple, came by, and he, when he saw the injured man, stepped over to him, and stood for a time looking at him, but presently crossed the road again, as if he

had been polluted, and went on in all haste, lest the like should happen to himself.

"But a Samaritan, travelling that way, came where the poor man lay, and, when he saw him, was moved with compassion at his misery; and went to him, and, lighting from his ass, bound up his wounds, after pouring oil mixed with wine on them, to assuage the pain, and soften the injured parts; and set him on his own beast, never thinking who he might be he was helping; whether Jew, heathen, or fellow-countryman; or of his own danger in such a spot; and brought him to the khan, which, you know, stands at the roadside, amidst the bare walls of rocks, three hours from Jerusalem. There he had every care taken of him, and stayed with him, tending him through the night. His own business forced him to leave him next day; but before doing so, he went to the keeper of the khan, and gave him two denarii, telling him to take care of him, and adding, that if more were needed, he would give it when he came back.

"Which of these three, do you think, was neighbour to him that fell among the robbers?"

The Rabbi, true to his national hatred, would not utter the hated word, "the Samaritan." "He that had mercy on him, no doubt," said he.

"Go and do thou in like manner," replied Jesus, and left him; if humbled and mortified; it is to be hoped, a wiser and better man.

A fragment of the familiar instructions of these months, by which Jesus daily trained His disciples, is preserved to us by St. Luke. He had, at an earlier period, given the Twelve and His other hearers, a model of prayer in the Sermon on the Mount, but now, one, perhaps of the later disciples, asked for a form of prayer such as other Rabbis, and as John, gave their followers. With the gentle repetition we so often find in the Gospels, Jesus, forthwith, once more recited the model He had already given, and took advantage of the request, to enforce the value of prayer by similar assurances of answer from God as He had given before. In one detail, however, He varied His language, by adding a brief and pointed parable.

"You know," said He, "how it is with men. If any of you have a friend, and go to him in the middle of the night, and call through the door, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has just come to my house from a journey; the weather was so hot, he could not start till the cool of the day; this has made him so late; and I have nothing to set before him;' most likely he whom you thus disturb will say to you from within, 'Trouble me not; the door is locked for the night, and my children are with me in bed, and I cannot wake them. I cannot get up and give you what you ask.' Yet, if you refuse to leave and keep renewing your request, he will, in the end, rise and give you as many loaves as you need, yielding to your importunity, what he would not do for you as his friend.

"If, now, selfish *men* listen to those who thus will not take a denial,

how much more surely will the God of love listen to humble and persistent prayer? Be sure, therefore, that they who, with earnest, believing, souls, seek the supply of spiritual wants for themselves, or others, will assuredly have their petitions heard."

While He was still in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, the Seventy, having fulfilled their mission, made their way back to Him. Like the Twelve, they returned in great joy at their success, and reported that even the devils had been subject to them, through their Master's name, though they had received no special power over them, such as He had given to the Twelve. It was a moment of calm triumph to Jesus, as the sure anticipation of infinitely greater results hereafter. His spirit caught the contagion of their gladness, and gloom and despondency were forgotten in the vision of the future triumph of the New Kingdom—His one all-absorbing thought. But there was a danger lest their very success might injure them. The consideration it had won them might tend to unworthy pride. It was needful to warn them, and moderate their self-confidence.

"You need not wonder," said He, "that Satan is not able to withstand you. Long ere now, I foresaw, in spirit, that he would fall like a lightning-flash from the height of his power, at my coming, and the putting forth of my might. He *has* fallen, now, to the earth, where his craft and designs can be seen and met. His sway is already broken by the new-begun Kingdom of God. It has struck him down, as it were, from the sky, with its secrecy and sudden surprises; and he is, now, as if seen, and easy to shun. I have broken his sceptre, and made it possible for you to do what you have done. Take heed, therefore, not to think too much of yourselves, as if the success were your own. I now give you far greater power than any you have yet enjoyed. You will, hereafter, tread all satanic powers—the serpents and scorpions of hell—under your feet, as victors tread under foot their conquered foes, and nothing will be suffered to hinder your triumph as my servants. You need not, therefore, fear Satan.

"Yet success over the enemy of souls is not that in which you should rejoice most. It may raise pride, and make you too secure. Rather rejoice that your names, as my disciples, are in the roll of citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. It is an infinitely greater honour than any outward respect these wonders could bring you."

The murderous outburst, from which Jesus had fled, was now a thing of the past, so that He could once more venture into Jerusalem, and even into the Temple. The spacious porches were a favourite haunt of the afflicted poor, and among these, of a poor man, blind from his birth. Surrounded and followed, as usual, by a number of disciples, Jesus was, one day, passing, when this man attracted His notice. It is not said that He spoke to him, but the mere fact of His paying any heed to him, suggested a question to some of those round Him. "Rabbi," they asked, "we have been taught that children are born lame, crooked, maimed, blind, or otherwise defective—for

some sin of their parents, or for some sin committed by themselves before birth. Who sinned, in this case—this man or his parents—that he was born blind?"

That there was a strict system of rewards and punishments during the present life, according to the merits or sins of individuals, had been the original doctrine of Jewish theology. It had gradually, however, been modified, though still held by the multitude; and it was superseded in the New Kingdom by the transfer of final retribution to the future world. The Rabbinical theology, sedulously taught in every synagogue, sought to reconcile the contradiction between the hereditary belief and the facts of life, by laboured and unsatisfactory theories. The words were put into the mouth of God Himself, in one of the current apologues so much in vogue, that "the good man, if prosperous, was so, as the son of a righteous man; while the unfortunate good man suffered as the son of a sinful parent. So, also, the wicked man might be prosperous, if the son of a godly parent; but if unfortunate, it showed that his parents had been sinners." It was further believed that a child might sin before its birth, though it is a question whether there was any general idea of the transmigration of souls, to account for suffering as the punishment of sin in some earlier existence.

"The affliction of this man," replied Jesus, "has been caused neither by his own sin, nor by that of his parents; but his being born blind offers an opportunity for the display of the divine power and goodness in his person. It is on such sufferers as he that I must show the mighty works which God has given me, as the Messiah, to do. In His service I must work unweariedly, as He, my Father, Himself works. Like Him with His work, I cannot intermit mine even on this day, though it be a Sabbath. I am like one who cannot leave his task till the night comes, when no one can work. The night is coming erelong to me, when I shall cease from all such labours, as the workman does at the close of day. As long as I am in the world, I must be the light of men: when I depart, the light will be withdrawn."

He might have opened the eyes of the poor man by a word, but a great lesson was to be taught His enemies. He wished to protest once more against the hypocritical strictness of the Rabbinical observance of Sabbath, which so entirely destroyed the true significance of the holy day. He would show that it was in full accordance with the office of the Messiah, not only Himself, to do what the dominant party denounced as WORK, on the Sabbath, but to require it also from him whom He cured.

It was the belief, in antiquity, that the saliva of one who was fasting was of benefit to weak eyes, and that clay relieved those who suffered from tumours on the eyelids. It may be that Jesus thought of this: at any rate, stooping to the ground, and mixing saliva with some of the dust, He touched the eyes of the blind man with it, and

then sent him to wash it off, in the pool of Siloam. It was impossible that the clay or the water could restore the eyesight; but Jesus had once more asserted His right to do works of mercy on the Sabbath; in opposition to the narrow pretences of the Pharisees; and the faith of the man himself was put to the test. He, forthwith, did as commanded, and his sight was at once made perfect.

Full of childish delight at the possession of the new amazing sense, the man must have attracted attention, even where the change wrought in his appearance prevented his being recognized. He was well known in the city as a beggar, blind from his birth. Presently, some asked, doubting their senses, "if this were not he who sat every day begging?" "It *is* he," said one. "It is some one *like* him," said others. "I *am* he," said the man. "How did you get your sight, then?" asked a number at once. The man told them. "Where is this Jesus?" they asked again; but he could not tell.

It was clear that another great miracle had been performed by the Teacher whom the authorities denounced; and, hence, from whatever motive, the man was taken before them. The sight of him might change their feelings towards Jesus, for even they did not pretend to deny the supernatural power of their hated opponent, though they tried to attribute it to the help of the Prince of devils.

Brought before the dignitaries of the Law and Temple, the man had to repeat the story of his cure. The miracle could not be denied; but the character of Jesus might, at least, be discredited, for it appeared that He had dared to break the Sabbath both in act and word. "This man is not of God," said some of the Council, "for does not the Law expressly forbid the anointing of the eyes with saliva on the Sabbath, as *work?* And, besides, no healing is permitted on the Sabbath except when life is in danger."

"How could a man that does wrong, work such miracles?" replied some of the more liberal-minded. God would never give such power to such a person. There is something special that needs looking into, in this case of what you call Sabbath-breaking—before you decide so confidently."

They were hopelessly divided, and at last, like Orientals, resolved to get the opinion of the man himself. They asked him, therefore, what he thought of Him who had cured him. "I think Him a prophet," answered the sturdy confessor. But it would never do to admit this, for even the Rabbis owned that a prophet might dispense with the laws of the Sabbath.

The hostile party in the Council were in a strait, and would fain deny the fact of the miracle altogether. They would, at least, require more evidence than the man's own word. Sending the officers for his parents, therefore, they had them brought before them, and asked them:—

"Is this your son, who, as you say, was born blind? How comes he to see, if that were so?" But the question brought no relief, for

the parents shrewdly refused to commit themselves beyond the bare acknowledgment that he was their son, and that he had been born blind. "He is of age—ask himself," added they. Nor was their caution unjustified, for they had heard that if any one acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah he would be "put out of the synagogue;" a punishment involving the direst consequences socially and religiously. It was, in fact, the lesser excommunication; which lasted thirty days, but might be lengthened for continued impenitence, or curtailed by contrition. It shut a person utterly from the synagogue, for even if he entered it, he was reckoned as not present; no mourning for the dead, and no rite of circumcision, could take place in his house; and no one but his wife or child could come within four cubits of him.

The discomfited Council could only fall back on the man himself. "He must," they told him, "take care of himself, else they would have to deal with him. He had better tell the whole truth, and confess what he knew about this Jesus, and thus show that he feared God, by giving Him the glory; for we know very well," said they, "that this man is a sinner." But he was neither to be brow-beaten nor dragooned, and would not yield an inch to either threats or persuasions. "It is a very strange thing," said he, "that you talk about Him so. I can say nothing about His being a sinner; I only know that whereas I was blind, now I see."

Foiled once more, they fell back on their first question. "What is it, you say, He did to you? How was it He opened your eyes?" But they had to do with one of sterner and manlier stuff than most. "I told you all that already," replied he, "and you did not listen; why do you wish to hear it again? Are you, also, like me, inclined to become His disciples?"

The court was not accustomed to be treated with so little deference and awe; their pride and dignity were sadly flustered, and they forgot both in their excitement. With the passionate heat of Orientals, they stooped to insult and wrangle with the humble creature at their bar. As they could get nothing against Jesus from him, they branded him as His disciple—"*You* are a disciple of this Galilæan: *we* are the disciples of Moses, the man of God: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not who has sent Him—it must have been Beelzebub, at best."

Unabashed, and true-hearted, the man was not to be put down by either priest or Rabbi. "Well, this is very strange," retorted he. "You say you don't know who has sent Him, and yet He has opened my eyes! A man who has done that, must, as you know, have come from God, and be no sinner; for every one knows that God alone can give power to work such a miracle, and He does not hear sinners, but only those who worship Him truly, and do His will. So wonderful an instance of the power of God being granted to any man has never been heard of, as that which has been granted to this Jesus; for, from the beginning of the world, such a thing was never known, as

the opening of the eyes of a man born blind, even by the greatest of the prophets. There is no such thing in any part of the Law or the Prophets. If this man were not from God, He could do nothing."

"What!" screamed several voices at once. "You, a creature tainted in your very core with sin, before your birth, and born with its miserable punishment on you,—you, an out-and-out worthless wretch,—do you venture to teach us? You are excommunicated." And so they cast him out of the synagogue, there and then.

The report of this incident soon reached Jesus. The blind beggar was the first confessor in the New Kingdom, and its Lord lost no time in acknowledging and strengthening one who had owned Him fearlessly before the very Council itself. Seeking him out, and telling him He had heard of His grateful fidelity, He added—"You believe on the Son of God, do you not?" The name, as that of Jesus, Himself, had not reached him, but he knew it as one of the titles of the expected Messiah. "Who is He, Lord," asked he, instantly, "that I may believe on Him?" "Thou hast seen Him, even now," answered Jesus, "and it is He who talks with thee." It was enough. The healed one had before him the mysterious Being whose power towards himself had shown Him to be "the messenger sent of God,"—Him whom he had only now confessed. "Lord," said he, "I believe," and rendered Him, forthwith, the worship due to the Messiah—God's anointed.

Meanwhile, a crowd had gathered, as the beggar, now seeing not only with bodily but spiritual eyes, threw himself at His feet. It was a moment of deep emotion. Addressing Himself to those around, among whom, as usual, were some of the ever-watchful Rabbis, Jesus seized the opportunity for a few more words of warning.

"I am come into the world," said He, "fan in hand, to separate the wheat from the chaff, and to bring a judgment-like division among men. The poor in spirit who feel their need of divine truth, and mourn their spiritual blindness, are enlightened by me, but those who think they see, and fancy they know the truth, are shown to be blind, and are shut out from my kingdom, to the blindness they have chosen."

"Are we blind, then?" asked some of the Rabbis in the crowd. He had classed them as those who fancied they alone saw, and their pride was roused by His venturing to speak of them, the teachers of the nation, as blind—language so opposed to the servility shown them as a rule.

"Blind?" replied Jesus—"it would be well if you were so, for, in that case, your disbelief in me would not be sinful. It would not show a wilful resistance to divine truth, but only that you had not yet attained the knowledge of it. But since you claim to see, it makes your unbelief criminal, and deepens your guilt, for it is your spiritual pride which leads you to reject me, and thus keeps you from believing, and so receiving pardon."

In the East, as in lonely mountainous districts of our own country, the relation of a shepherd to his flock is very different from the mechanical and indifferent one of some other parts. The loneliness of shepherd life in these countries throws man and the creatures he tends so much together—binds them so to each other by a sense of companionship, of dangers shared, and pleasures mutually enjoyed—that the Eastern shepherd, like the shepherd of our own mountains, forgets the distance between himself and his flock, and becomes their friend. Nor is the sense of dependence only on his side. The sheep are drawn to their shepherd as much as he to them. They are all to each other. They share in common the silence and lonely magnificence of the mountains, or the desert. We learn to love that for which we brave peril; and the dangers of torrents, of robbers, of wolves, of thirst, or of straying endear the flock for which they are borne, to the Oriental; as the dangers of winter storms, or mountain mists, and the thousand incidents of pastoral life in wild districts, do with our Highland shepherds.

Nothing, therefore, could be more touching, in a pastoral country like Palestine, than images of care or tenderness drawn from shepherd life, and such Jesus now introduced with surpassing beauty.

"I have come into the world," said He, in effect, "to gather together into a great fold the new Israel of God. He who enters by the door is a true and authorized under-shepherd, but any who enter otherwise are not true leaders and shepherds, but are like thieves and robbers who climb over the wall for evil ends.

"When the true shepherd thus enters by the door, the sheep he tends hear his voice, and he calls them by name, and leads them out. And when he has led forth all his own, he goes before them, as the shepherds before their sheep, and his flock follow him, because they know his voice. And, as a stranger, who is not the shepherd known by a flock, as soon as the sheep hear his voice, scatters it in alarm, so, while true shepherds are recognized as such by the spiritual Israel, pretenders are known by their words, and shunned." The drift of this parable, or allegory, was sufficiently transparent, but those at whom it was pointed were too self-satisfied to recognize it. They declared it unintelligible.

Jesus, therefore, felt Himself necessitated to repeat the main thought, and thus enforce it on their attention.

"I see," said He, "that you do not understand the parable I have just delivered: let me explain it. I tell you with the utmost solemnity; I am the one only Door of the fold of the flock of God. Other teachers have sought to lead you in your day, but all who have done so, before my coming, are like the thieves and robbers who enter a fold over the wall. I frankly tell you I mean the priests and Rabbis, my enemies. They have refused to enter, through Me, the Door, and have rejected me. But the true sheep of God—the spiritual Israel—have not listened to them. Note well, as I repeat it, I, alone, am the

door of the true fold of the flock of God. If any one enter by me into the fold, as a shepherd or teacher and leader of the flock, he, himself, will be saved in the world to come, and preserved to life eternal, and will have free entrance to the sheep here, to lead them out to pasture. He who does not thus enter through me, seeks the sheep only for selfish and evil ends; like the thief, who, avoiding the door climbs over into the fold, to steal, kill, and destroy. I may call myself, in opposition to such false shepherds, not only the door, but the Good Shepherd, for I have come, not to destroy the flock of God, but to give them true abiding life in my kingdom, and that with all fulness and delight of spiritual joys.

"I am, indeed, the Good Shepherd, for I come to lay down my life for the sheep. But he who is a hireling and not a true shepherd—he who seeks to lead and teach the flock of God, not from love and self-sacrifice, but for gain—the hypocrite who pretends to be a shepherd—sees the powers of evil coming like a ravening wolf, to tear the flock by persecutions; and flees, and leaves it to its fate, so that they snatch off many, and scatter all. He thus flees because he is only a hireling, thinking of himself and caring nothing for the sheep.

"I, once more, am the Good Shepherd, and no hireling, for I know my sheep, and they know me with such deep communion of love and spiritual life, as there is between my heavenly Father and myself; and I shall presently lay down my life for them. Yet, not for those of Israel alone. I have other sheep, of other lands, and them also I must lead into the one fold, that there may be but one flock, under me, the one shepherd.

"But this triumphal issue can be reached only by my death and resurrection; yet I rejoice to die thus for the sheep, since the love of my heavenly Father rests on me, because I give myself for them. I die freely, of my own choice, a willing self-sacrifice. No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of myself. I am sent forth by my Father, as the Messiah, and, as such, lay down my life and take it again; not to carry out any purpose of my own, but to complete the great plan of salvation God has designed. It is in obedience to His divine command I thus freely give myself up to death, and it is to complete the gracious plan of mercy towards the flock which my death will redeem, that I shall rise again from the grave as their Great Shepherd, to guide them to heaven."

Had the bigoted crowd known the full significance of some of these words, they would have risen against Jesus once more; for the future admission of the heathen into the New Kingdom of God was more distinctly intimated than ever before. As the end of His work drew nearer, the narrow prejudices even of the Twelve were ever more constantly kept in view, and the thought that the kingdom He was founding must embrace all nations, daily enforced.

But neither this wide catholicity, which a Jew would have held as treason to his nation, nor the mysterious allusions to His own future,

were rightly understood. The old slander that "He had a devil, and was mad in consequence, and not worthy to be listened to," rose from the lips of some, and the best that even the most liberal among the crowd could say, was the negative praise—"These are not the words of one who is possessed." Besides, though a devil might, doubtless, work some miracles through man as its instrument, it was impossible to believe that it either would or could work one so beneficent and stupendous as the opening of the eyes of the born blind.

CHAPTER LII.

A WANDERING LIFE.

It was now near the end of Khislev—the cold month—equivalent to part of our November and December. The twenty-fifth of the month, which, according to Wieseler, fell, this year, on the 20th December, was, with the next seven days, a time of universal rejoicing: for the Dedication Festival, in commemoration of the renewal of the Temple worship, after its suspension under Antiochus Epiphanes, was held through the week.

Jesus, ever pleased to mingle in innocent joys, and glad to seize the opportunity for proclaiming the New Kingdom, which the gatherings of the season afforded, once more returned to Jerusalem to attend it. He had been in the neighbourhood since the Feast of Tabernacles, nearly three months before, and this visit would be the last, till His final entry, to die.

The weather had been wet and rough, so that He was fain to avail Himself, like the crowds, of the shelter of the arcade running along the east side of the Temple enclosure; known as Solomon's porch, from a fragment of the first Temple, left standing by Nebuchadnezzar.

The rain drove the people from the open courts, and Jesus, like others, was in the Porch, apparently without His disciples. The time was fitted to wake the old temptation of ambition, had it had any charms. How easily might He eclipse the hero of all this rejoicing, and by His supernatural power achieve victories, compared with which those of Judas Maccabæus would be nothing! But He had far nobler aims.

The Pharisaic party, themselves, may have had such secret thoughts in connection with Him. Be this as it may, they now suddenly came and began to ask Him if He would not, at last, relieve their minds by some direct and express declaration whether He were the Messiah or not. It may be, He could read in their looks that He needed only to speak a word to have their support, and He knew that both they and the nation, at such a time, were ready to flame into universal enthusiasm for any leader who would undertake to lead them against

Rome. But earthly ambition had no attractions for His pure spirit.

"We have waited long and anxiously," said they, "for some decisive word. If Thou art the Messiah, tell us openly."

"I have already told you," answered Jesus, "both by the witness of the miracles I have done in my Father's name, and in words; but you have not believed me, because, as I said not long ago, you are not my disciples, or, as I love to call them, my sheep. If you had been, you would have believed in me. You may, yourselves, see that you are not of my flock, for those who are so listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, as sheep know and listen to the voice of their shepherd, and are known by him, and follow him. Nothing, indeed, can be more close and abiding than my relations to them, for I lead them not to mere earthly good, but give them eternal life, and am their shepherd hereafter as well as here; taking care that they shall never perish, and that no one, even beyond death, shall snatch them out of my hand. Moreover, being in my hand, they are, in effect, in that of my Father, for He is ever with me, and works by me. He gave them to me at first, and He still guards them, nor can any one snatch them from His hands, for He is greater than all the powers of earth and hell. Wonder not that I speak of their being both in my Father's hands and in mine, for I and the Father are One."

The excitable, fanatical crowd had listened patiently till the last words, which seemed the most audacious blasphemy—a claim of essential oneness with the Almighty. In a moment they were once more scattered in search of stones, with which to kill Him, for what they deemed His crime, and presently gathered round Him again with them, to fell Him to the earth. But Jesus remained undismayed. "I have done many great works of mercy," said He, calmly, "which show that the Father is with me, because they could only come from the presence of His power. They are enough to show you that *He* thinks me no blasphemer. For which of these mighty works will you stone me?"

"We would not think of stoning Thee for a good work," answered the crowd; "it is for your blasphemy—that you, a man, should make yourself God."

"Is it not written in your Law," replied Jesus, "of the rulers of Israel, the representatives and earthly embodiments of the majesty of Jehovah, your invisible King, '*I said ye are gods?*' If God Himself called them gods, to whom this utterance of His came,—and you cannot deny the authority of Scripture,—how can you say of me,—whom the Father has consecrated to a far higher office than ruler, or even prophet—to that of Messiah; and whom He has not only thus set apart to this great office, but sent into the world clothed with the mighty powers I have shown, and the fulness of grace and truth you now see in me,—that I blaspheme, because I have said I am God's Son? Your unbelief in me, which is the ground of the

charge, would have some excuse if I did not perform such works as prove me to have been sent by my Father. But if I do such works, then believe them, if you will not believe me; that you may thus learn and know that what I have said is true—that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."

They had waited for a retractation, but had heard a defence. Instantly, hands were thrust out on every side, to lay hold on Him, and lead Him outside the Temple to stone Him; but He shrank back into the crowd, and passing through it, escaped.

Jerusalem and Judea were evidently closed against Him, as Galilee had been for some time past. There seemed only one district in any measure safe,—the half heathen territory of Perea, across the Jordan. The ecclesiastical authorities and the people at large, instead of accepting Him, and the spiritual salvation He offered, had become steadily more obdurate and hostile. It was necessary at last to give up all attempts to win them, and to retire, for the short time that yet remained to Him, to this safer district. He chose the part of it in which John had begun his ministrations; perhaps in hopes of a more hopeful soil, from the cherished remembrance of His predecessor; perhaps as a spot sacred to holy associations of His own.

Here, with His wonted earnestness, He once more proclaimed the New Kingdom, and was cheered by a last flicker of success; for crowds once more resorted to Him, many of whom became His disciples. "John," said they, "did no miracles, great though he was, but his testimony to this Man, who was to come after him,—that He was greater than himself,—is true; for not only does He teach us the words of truth; He confirms them by mighty wonders, which show Him to be the Messiah." Jesus was reaping, as Bengel says, the posthumous fruit of the Baptist's work.

The quiet retreat of Perea was, however, soon to be broken. The family of Bethany, to whom Jesus owed so many happy hours, had been in health when He left, but a message suddenly reached Him from the two sisters, Mary and Martha, the very simplicity of which still touches the heart: "Lord, he whom Thou lovest,—our brother Lazarus,—is sick." His love they felt would need nothing more. The messengers doubtless expected that He would have returned with them at once, but He saw things in a higher light, and moved on a different spiritual plane. Instead of going with them therefore, He dismissed them with the intimation that the sickness would not really end in death; but would be overruled by God to His own glory, by disclosing that of His Son—Jesus Himself. It was from no indifference that He thus delayed, though it left His friends to bitter disappointment, and Himself to the suspicion of neglect. "He loved Martha and her sister, and Lazarus," says John. But still He delayed, in obedience to a higher counsel than man's.

The messengers had taken a day to come, and it would take another for Jesus to go to Bethany, but though He knew this, He re-

mained two days more in the place where the sad news had reached Him. On the third day, however, He surprised His disciples, who had fancied that He hesitated from fear of His enemies, by telling them that He was about to return to Judea.

"The Rabbis and priests were seeking only the other day to stone Thee, Rabbi," said they in amazement—"and art Thou really going back into the very jaws of danger?"

"The time allotted me by God for my work," replied Jesus, "is not yet done, and so long as it lasts no one can harm me. The time appointed for a man, is like the hours of light given to a traveller for his journey. There is no fear of his stumbling in the day, because he sees the sun; but as he stumbles when it has set, so man, though he walk safely till the appointed time ends, can do so no longer when it is over. Till mine is over, I am safe."

Pausing a few minutes, He went on to tell them why He was going to Bethany, in spite of all danger. "Our friend Lazarus," said He, "has fallen asleep, but I go that I may awake him out of sleep." Unwilling to expose themselves or their Master to unnecessary peril, their wishes read in these words a cause for remaining where they were. "To sleep is good for the sick," said they, thinking He spoke of natural sleep. But their hopes were speedily dashed. "Lazarus," said He, now openly, "is dead, and I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there to heal him from mere sickness. The far greater proof of my divine glory, which you will see in my raising him from the grave, would not have been given, and thus you would have lost the aid to still firmer trust in me, which is so necessary now I am so soon to leave you."

Such words might have at once quieted their fears and kindled their zeal, but they still saw in His return to Judea, only a journey to His own death. Thomas the Twin, at last broke silence—"It becomes us to do all that our Master commands, even when He asks us to risk our lives. Let us go with Him, that we may show our love and fidelity by dying with Him." A true-hearted but sad man!

It is clear that Jesus feared violence, for as He approached Bethany, He lingered outside the village, as if to learn how matters stood, before venturing farther. Nor was it without cause, for notwithstanding their friendship with Jesus, the family of Lazarus, moving in good society as they did, had many friends and connections amongst those hostile to him, and a number of these had come to pay the customary visit of condolence to the two sisters.

The four days since the death had been sad ones in the little household. They had fasted all the day after it, and had since eaten nothing but an occasional egg, or some lentiles; for that was the only food allowed mourners, for the first seven days. The corpse, which had had a lamp burning beside it from the moment of death, as a symbol of the immortality of the soul, had been borne to the grave after a few hours; an egg had been broken as a symbol of mortality: and

the cottage left to the two survivors. The funeral procession had been sad enough, with its dirge flutes, and wailing hired women; the two sisters and their relations following, and then the neighbours and friends; for it was held a religious duty in all who could, to attend a corpse to the grave. At the grave's mouth, the men had chanted the sublime ninetieth Psalm in a slow circuit of seven times round the bier, on which lay the dead wrapped in white linen. The long procession, headed by the veiled women, had stopped thrice on the way to the grave, while the leader spoke words of comfort to the bereaved ones, and tender exhortations to passers by,—"Comfort ye, comfort ye, ye dear ones! Lift up your souls, lift up your souls! Come to me, all ye who are of sad and troubled heart, and take part in the sorrow of your neighbours."

Once more in their desolate home, the sisters, with veiled heads, even in their own chamber, and with unsandaled feet, sat down on the earth, in the midst of a circle of at least ten friends or professional mourners; with rent clothes and dust on their heads. None spoke till the bereaved ones had done so, but every sentence of theirs was followed by some word of sympathy and comfort, and by the wails of the mourners. And thus it would be for seven days, and had been for four, before Jesus arrived, for many friends had come from Jerusalem to comfort the two sisters.

Word was presently brought to the house, that Jesus had come, and, forthwith, Martha, true to her character as the more active of the two sisters, rose from the ground, where she and Mary had been sitting, and went out, wrapped in her mourning dress and deeply veiled, to go to Him; but Mary remained where she was, for she had not heard the good news.

"Lord," said Martha, when she saw Him, "if Thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died,"—as if she thought, "Why did He then delay?" But as she looked at Him her faith revived, and she added, "Yet though he be dead, I know that God will grant you your utmost prayer, even if it be to receive back Lazarus from the dead."

"Your brother will rise again," replied Jesus, in designedly ambiguous words, to lead Martha's faith from mere personal interest to higher thoughts. Martha understood Him only of the resurrection at the last day, in which she felt assured Lazarus would have part, and had hoped for something so much nearer and greater, that so vague an answer disappointed her. She could only find words to say, with sad resignation, that "she knew that he would rise," as Jesus had seemed to say, "at the last day."

It was well she answered thus, for Jesus presently used her words to turn her from mere personal interests, to Himself, and, in doing so, uttered that wondrous sentence which has carried hope and triumph to millions of the dying and the bereaved, and will do so while time and mortality endure. "I,"—and no other but I—"am the Resur-

rection and the Life. He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die"—words which we may paraphrase thus:—"I am He whose is the power to raise from the dead, and make alive for evermore. He that believeth in me, though his body die, will yet continue to live without break or interruption—for, till the resurrection, he will be in paradise, and after it, and by its means, he will enter on the fulness of life eternal. And every one who is still alive, and believes in me, will never die, in any true sense; for the death of the body is not really death, but the open gate into life eternal. Believest thou this?"

"Yea, Lord," sobbed out the stricken heart. "I believe that Thou art the King-Messiah, the Son of God, who was to come into the world;" and having made this great confession, she went away to call her sister secretly, for fear of those hostile to Him among her own friends. "Mary," whispered she, "the Teacher is here, and calls for thee." She would not mention the name for caution.

It was enough. The next instant Mary was on the road to Jesus, who was still outside the village, in the place where Martha had met Him. The way to the grave was in that direction, and the friends, concluding she had gone thither to weep, kindly rose and followed her, that she might not be left to her lonely grief. Jesus could no longer remain hidden, but the presence of hostile witnesses confirmed the more strikingly the great miracle that was to follow.

Falling in tears at the feet of Jesus, and embracing them, Mary's full heart overflowed in the same lament as her sister's, for they had often spoken the same words to each other; "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The presence of her friends, who she knew were no friends of His, hindered more. It was a moment fitted to move even a strong heart, for those around, with true Oriental demonstrativeness, wept and lamented aloud, along with Mary. But the sight of men who were filled with the bitterest enmity to Himself, joining in lamentations with Mary, His true-hearted friend —men with no sympathy for the highest goodness, but ready to chase it, in His person, from the earth, because it condemned their cold religious hypocrisy—showing natural tenderness while such malignity was in their hearts—roused His indignation, so that He visibly shuddered with emotion, and had to restrain Himself by an earnest effort. Yet the cloud of righteous anger passed off in a moment, and sorrow for His friend, and for the grief of the loved one at His feet, asserted itself. Silent tears trickled down His cheeks, for, though He was the Son of God, He was no less truly than ourselves a man, moved by the sight of human sorrow.

The group of mourners were variously affected; the most kindly remarking how dearly He must have loved the dead man, that He should now weep so at His death. But the more malicious and hardened only saw in His tears a welcome proof of His helplessness,

for had it been otherwise, could He not as well have cured Lazarus of his illness as give sight to the blind? The healing of the blind man must surely have been a cheat, for certainly He would have come to Bethany sooner, had He been able to do anything for His sick friend. The muttered words reached the ears of Jesus, and roused anew His indignation; and thus, with mingled anger and sorrow, He reached the grave.

Like most graves in the limestone districts of Palestine, it was a recess cut in the side of a natural cave, and closed by a huge stone fitted into a groove.

In this gloomy niche lay Lazarus, swathed from head to foot in loose linen wrappings, and now four days dead.

"Take away the stone," said Jesus.

But Martha, with her wonted matter-of-fact nature, shrank at the words, for she thought of the awful spectacle of her brother, now hastening to corruption. Christ's words about the resurrection had taken away any hope of seeing Lazarus alive again till the great day, and she would rather the sacred remains were left undisturbed. A gentle reproof from Jesus was, however, enough to let her leave Him to His will. "Did not I send word to thee by thy messenger that if thou wouldst only believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone.

Jesus had already, in the stillness of His own breast, communed with the Father, and knew, in Himself that His prayer that Lazarus might be restored to life had been heard. Lifting up His eyes to heaven, He now uttered His thanks that it had been so. "Father, I thank thee that Thou hast heard me—yet I knew that Thou hearest me always, for Thy will is ever mine, and mine is ever Thine. But I thank Thee thus, for the sake of those who stand around, that they may be convinced that what I do is done in Thy power, and that I am assuredly sent forth from Thee."

What followed is best given in the words of St. John. "And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice, LAZARUS, COME FORTH. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face had been bound about with a napkin—(that had tied up his jaw four days before, when it fell, in death). Jesus saith unto them, 'Loose him, and let him go (home):'" and he who had been dead, now freed from his grave-clothes, himself returned in the fulness of youthful strength and health to the cottage from which he had been carried forth on a bier four days before.

Of the after-history of Lazarus, with one momentary exception, we know nothing, for none of the numerous traditions and legends respecting him are reliable. He is said to have been thirty years old when he was raised from the dead, and to have lived for thirty years after; to have been of royal descent; to have owned a whole quarter of Jerusalem, and to have been, by profession, a soldier. His bones were said to have been found in the year A.D. 890, with those of Mary

Magdalene, in the island of Cyprus! and the remains thus honoured were carried to Constantinople. Other traditions take him to Marseilles, and speak of him as the first Christian Bishop of that city. But the very extravagance of these legends shows their worthlessness as history.

The results of the miracle were momentous to Jesus Himself. Many of the party of the Rabbis who had come to comfort the sisters, found themselves constrained to believe in one whose claims were attested by an act so transcendent, and so indisputable. But some justified all that Jesus had said of their malignity by not only shutting their eyes to what they were determined not to admit, but by playing the informer to the ecclesiastical authorities.

The great ecclesiastical court of the nation, known in the Talmud as the "Sanhedrim," had been in abeyance for many years, for there is no trace of it during the whole period of the Herods, or of the Romans. The name, indeed, occurs in the New Testament, but it is simply as the Greek word for "an assembly," which was adopted by the Rabbis, at a later period. Herod had broken up the great Rabbinical council, and, henceforth, the only authorities recognized as the fountains of Jewish Law were the schools of such Rabbis as Hillel and Schammai. There was no such thing as a legal Jewish court, which had power to enforce its decisions. The authority granted to the leading schools was only a tribute of confidence in their soundness and wisdom. Hence, in the days of Christ, there was no legal Jewish court in existence, and the criminal processes mentioned in connection with Him, were only acts of assemblies which the high priest for the time, the only representative of the old Theocracy recognized by the supreme Roman authority, called together in angry haste, informally, and which acted by no judicial rules of procedure.

Such an illegal gathering was summoned by the Sadducean chief priests and the leading Pharisaic Rabbis, to discuss what should be done respecting Jesus, now that the incontestable fact of the resurrection of Lazarus had crowned all His preceding miracles. Having no idea of a Messiah apart from political revolution, to be inaugurated by Him, it seemed likely that, if something were not done to put Him out of the way, the excitement of the people, through His miracles, would become irresistible, and lead to a national rising, fiercer even than that of Judas the Galilæan. To the popular party, represented by the Pharisees present, this would be no undesirable issue; but the courtly Sadducees shrank from any disturbance, fearing that, in the end, the Romans would crush it with their legions, and, as a punishment, abolish the hierarchical constitution, which gave them their wealth and position; and, with it, the ecclesiastical and civil laws which flattered the nation with an illusory independence.

The Temple, and all the far-reaching vested interests bound up with it, had long existed only on sufferance, and would at once perish in the storm of a national insurrection; and the nation, stripped of its

local laws, so vital to a theocracy, would be secularized into a part of Rome, with the hated imperial heathen law, instead of the laws of God and the Rabbis.

The acting high priest at this time was Joseph Caiaphas. He had been appointed by the procurator Valerius Gratus, shortly before that Governor left the province, in A.D. 25—when Jesus was about twenty years of age: and he continued to hold his great office till the year A.D. 36, when he was removed by the proconsul Vitellius, shortly after the recall of Pilate. He was, in every way, a creature of the Romans, and, as such, received little respect from the nation, though his dignity secured him official authority.

Rising in the meeting, which had been hitherto very divided and irresolute as to the wisest course to be taken, Caiaphas begged to give his opinion—

"You know nothing at all," said he, "else you would not have so much questioning and discussing. You have not considered that it is expedient for you, in view of your interests as priests and Rabbis, that this one man should die, to save Israel, as such, from the destruction that threatens it, if you let Him stir up a Messianic revolt; for, in that case, the whole nation must perish. The Romans will come with their legions and close our Temple, annul our independence by abolishing our laws, and waste us with fire and sword."

There could be no misconception of words so plain. They were a distinct advice to those present to put Jesus to death, as the one way to save themselves, and maintain things as they were in Church and State. Words so momentous, for they decided the fate of Jesus, might well seem to St. John no mere human utterance, but the involuntary expression through unworthy lips, of the near approach of the supreme act in the divine plan of mercy to mankind.

From that day the death of Jesus was only a question of time and opportunity. Henceforth, the Jewish primate and his suffragans kept steadily in view—in concert with their hereditary and deadly enemies, the Rabbis—the arrest of Jesus, and His subsequent death. Their officers, or any one hostile to Him, might apprehend Him at any moment. It was clearly no longer possible for Him to show Himself openly, and He, therefore, retired with His disciples to a city called Ephraim, now difficult of identification. It seems to have been in the wild uncultivated hill-country, north-east of Jerusalem, between the central towns and the Jordan valley. A village now known as El Taiyibeh, on a conical hill, commanding a view of the whole eastern slope of the country, the valley of the Jordan, and the Dead Sea, though only sixteen miles from Jerusalem, has been thought by Dr. Robinson the site. It answers at least in its secluded privacy, and the ready access it offers to the still wilder regions beyond.

Only a few weeks remained of our Saviour's life, and these He had to spend as a fugitive, to whom no place was safe. He had, however,

the joy of seeing the old enthusiasm of the multitudes revived, for Matthew and Mark both speak of the vast numbers who followed Him in this closing period, attracted, doubtless, more by the fame of His past miracles, and by continuous displays of the same supernatural power towards the diseased of every kind, than by His teaching. Yet there must have been not a few "sheep" in such vast gatherings. The clouds were parting as the day closed, and were being lighted with sunset colours, before the night darkened all.

From Ephraim He soon passed over the Jordan, to what, for the moment, seemed a safer retreat. The lesser excommunication, which had driven Him from the synagogues of Galilee and Judea, had perhaps expired, or the bann may not have been effective in Perea; for He once more had access to these assemblies on the Sabbaths, and was allowed, as before, to teach the people, who were thus most easily reached. It was impossible, however, that He could long avoid collision with some or other of the countless Rabbinical laws, which fettered every movement of free spiritual life, and, as in the past, the fanatical Sabbath laws offered the first occasions of trouble. Two instances are recorded by St. Luke.

As He was teaching on a Sabbath in the synagogue of one of the outlying towns of Perea—half Jewish, half heathen—He noticed in the audience, behind the lattice which separated the women from the men, a poor creature drawn together by a rheumatic affection, which had bowed her frame so terribly that she could not raise herself erect. As she painfully struggled into her place, Jesus saw her, and doubtless read, in her supplicating looks, and in the very fact that she had come to the House of God in spite of such physical infirmity, an evidence that she was a fit subject for His pitying help. Rising, and calling across the congregation to her, the welcome words fell on her ears—"Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." The cure was instantaneous. In a moment she was once more straight and whole, after eighteen years of deformity, and her irrepressible thanks to God for the mercy vouchsafed her, rang through the synagogue, and made a great commotion.

The head of the congregation, however, was a cold Rabbinical pedant. Intensely professional, he could see nothing but an irregularity. It was the Sabbath day, and the Rabbis had decided that no cure was lawful on the Sabbath except where death was imminent. "Silence," cried he, indignantly, "there are six days in which men ought to work; it would be much more becoming if this person were to remember that: and if you, for your part, want to be healed by Him, see that you come on a week-day, so that He have no excuse for breaking the holy Sabbath, by doing the work of curing you on it."

Indignation flashed from the eyes of Jesus, and turning to the speaker, He denounced his heartless formalism, so utterly opposed to the true religion of which He was the official representative. "You,

and the whole class who think with you, are hypocritical actors," said He; "your words prove it, for they are contradicted by your daily conduct. Do you not loose your asses, or your oxen, from the manger, where they are tied, on the Sabbath, and lead them away to water them? And if so, ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, and, as such, one of God's own people—who is of unspeakably greater worth than any ox or ass, to be loosed to-day, though it *be* the Sabbath, from this bond, with which Satan has chained her, for now, eighteen years?"

There could be no reply to such a vindication. The ruler and his party were silenced, and put to shame before the quick-witted audience. The worship of the letter had received another deadly blow.

A second incident, very similar, occurred soon after. One of the leading Pharisees had invited Jesus to dine with him on the Sabbath, as the day specially devoted to social entertainments by the Rabbis,—with the sinister design of watching Him and reporting to those in authority. A number of Rabbis and Pharisees had been invited to meet Him, but they had not yet lain down to their meal, when a man, ill with dropsy, entered the open door of the house, with others who dropped in, with Oriental freedom, to look on, and stand about. In his case, no doubt, the motive of his coming was that he might attract the notice of Jesus. He was afraid, however, to speak, for fear of those present, and patiently waited to see if Jesus would, of His own accord, cure him. He had not long to wait. Looking at him, Jesus turned to the guests with the question He had asked before, in similar circumstances—"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or is it not?" In their consciences they could not say it was not, but few men have the courage of their opinions, when current sentiment runs the other way, so they were silent. But silence was a virtual affirmative, for, if it were wrong, it was their bounden duty, as the public guardians of religion, to say so. Passing over, therefore, to the swollen and wretched being, He put His hand on him; cured him at once, and sent him away. Then, turning to the confused and baffled company, He completed their discomfiture by an appeal similar to that which He had made in the case of the woman healed shortly before. "Which of you, let me ask, if his son, or even only his ox, had fallen into a pit, would not immediately draw him out, on discovering it—even on the Sabbath?" No wonder that nothing further was said on the subject.

The couches on which the guests reclined at meals were arranged so as to form three sides of a square, the fourth being left open to allow the servants to bring in the dishes. The right-hand couch was reckoned the highest, and the others, the middle, and the lowest, respectively, and the places on each couch were distinguished in the same way, from the fact that the guest who reclined with his head, as it were, in the bosom of him behind, seemed to be the lower of the two. The highest place on the highest couch, was, thus, the

"chief place;" and human nature, the same in all ages, inevitably made it be eagerly coveted, and as precedence was marked by distance from it, there was an almost equal anxiety to get as near it as possible. With the vanity and self-righteousness of a moribund caste, there was no little scheming among the Rabbis for the best place, and much anxiety on the part of the host not to give offence; for to place a Rabbi below any one not a Rabbi, or below a fellow Rabbi of lower standing, or younger, was an unpardonable affront, and a discredit to religion itself. The intolerable pride that had made one of their order, in the days of Alexander Jannæus, seat himself between Alexander and his queen, on the ground that "wisdom" made its scholars sit among princes, remained unchanged. Such petty ambition, so unworthy in public teachers of morals and religion, and so entirely in contrast with His own instructions to His disciples, to seek no distinction but that of the deepest humility, did not fail to strike the GREAT GUEST, who had calmly taken the place assigned Him. Addressing the company—"You are wrong," said He, "in revealing your wishes, and obtruding your self-assertion in such a way. Let me counsel you how to act. If invited to a marriage feast, never take the chief place on the couches, lest some one of higher standing for learning or piety come, and your host ask you to go down to a lower place, to make room for the more honoured guest. Take, rather, the lowest place, when you enter, that your host, when he comes in, may invite you to take a higher, and thus honour you before all. Pride is its own punishment, in this, as in far graver matters, for, whether before God or man, he who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

It was an old custom in Israel to invite the poorer neighbours to the special meals on the consecrated flesh of offerings not used at the altar, and on similar half-religious occasions, to brighten their poverty for the moment, by kindly hospitality. This beautiful usage was, in the time of Jesus, among the things of the past, for the priest or Rabbi of His day would have trembled at the thought of being defiled by contact with people whose position made it impossible to be as scrupulous in the observance of the endless legal injunctions demanded, as themselves.

The meal at which Jesus was now present was very possibly one to which, in old times, such very different guests would have been asked. Or, it may be, the luxury displayed drew the attention of one so simple in His habits. Not a few neighbours, in very different circumstances from the guests, had likely entered, to look on and listen, but caste looked at them askance, as if they were an inferior race. Noticing this, our Lord addressed Himself to the host in a friendly way:—

"Have you ever thought what hospitality would yield you most pleasure? When you wish on special occasions to give a dinner or supper, let me tell you what you would always look back upon with

the purest joy. Do not invite your rich friends to it, or your family or kinsmen, or well-to-do neighbours. They will invite you in return, and this will destroy the worth of your act, for which you expect a recompense from God at the resurrection. Instead of such guests, invite the poor, the hungry, the lame, the maimed, and the blind. If you entertain such, they will reward you richly by their gratitude, and if you have invited them from an honest heart, as a duty, God Himself will remember it at the resurrection of the righteous."

One of the guests had listened attentively. The mention of the resurrection of the righteous, naturally, under the circumstances, raised the thought of the heavenly banquet which the Rabbis expected to follow that event. "Blessed are those," said he, "who shall eat bread at the great feast in the Kingdom of God, after the resurrection. It would, indeed, be well to give such entertainments as Thou hast named, which would be thus so richly repaid in the world to come."

This remark gave Jesus an opportunity of delivering a parable which must have run terribly counter to the prejudices of the company. The spirit of caste that prevailed in the hierarchical party, and their utter want of sympathy for the down-trodden masses, were abhorrent to His whole nature. It was daily clearer that the religious and moral impulse by which He was to revolutionize the world, would never come from Israel as a nation. The opportunity had been offered and even pressed, but it had been rejected, and hence He was free to proclaim the great truth, which, for a time, He had held back, that the Heathen, as well as the Jew, was invited, on equal terms, to the privileges of the New Kingdom of God. It was specially necessary in these last months of His life to make this prominent, that the minds of the disciples, above all, might be prepared for a revolution of thought so momentous and signal. He, therefore, now, took every opportunity of showing that the invitations of the New Kingdom, in fulfilment of the eternal purpose of God, were to be addressed as freely to heathen as to Israel, and that the religion He was founding was one of spirit, and truth, and liberty, for the WHOLE WORLD. This revelation, so transcendent in the history of the race, He once more disclosed, had they been able to understand Him, at the Pharisee's table.

"A certain man," said He, as if in answer to the last speaker, "made a great supper, and invited many guests; doing so early, that they might have ample time to prepare, and keep themselves free from other engagements. When the hour fixed for the banquet came, he sent his servant—as is usual—once more to those invited, to say that all was ready, and to pray them to come. But though they had had ample time to make all arrangements, they were still alike busy and unconcerned about the invitation, and, as if by common agreement, each in turn excused himself from accepting it. 'I have just bought a field,' said one, 'and must go and see it—I beg your master

will hold me excused'—and went off to his land. 'It is impossible for me to come,' said another, 'for I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and am on the point of starting to try them.' A third begged to be excused because he had only just married, and therefore could not come, as he had a feast of his own.

"The servant had, therefore, to return to his master with this sorry list of excuses, each of which was a marked affront. 'I shall see that my feast has not been prepared for nothing,' said he to the servant—'go out, at once, to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in all the poor, the maimed, the blind, and the lame you can find, that my table may be filled.'

"There was still room, however, after this had been done. 'Go outside the city to the country roads and hedgeways,' said the householder, 'and gather any waifs and beggars you find, and compel them to come in, for my house must be filled, and none of the men I invited to my supper will taste it.'"

Had the hearers but known it, this parable was a deadly thrust at their most cherished prejudices. The priests and Rabbis, leaders of the nation, had been invited again and again by Jesus and His disciples, to the spiritual banquet of the New Kingdom, but they had despised the invitation, on any excuse, or on none. The poor and outcast people, the sinners and publicans, and the hated multitude, who neglected the Rabbinical rules, had then been summoned, and had gladly come, and, now, the invitation was to go forth to those outside Israel—the abhorred heathen—and they, too, were to come freely, and sit down at the great table of the kingdom of the Messiah, with no conditions or disabilities; while they who, in their pride, had refused to come, were finally rejected.

It was the proclamation, once more, of the mighty truth which might well be too hard for those who first heard it, to understand, since it is imperfectly realized after nineteen centuries—that external rites and formal acts are of no value with God, in themselves: that He looks at the conscience alone: that neither circumcision nor sacrifices, nor legal purifications, nor rigid observance of Sabbath laws, nor fasts, but the state of the heart, determines the relation of man to God.

Before leaving the world, our Lord would put it beyond question that His religion knew no caste, or national privilege: that it was independent of the cumbrous machinery of rite and ceremony which had crushed the life out of the religion of the Old Testament; and that it could reign, in its divine perfection, in any human heart that opened itself to the Spirit of God.

CHAPTER LIII.

IN PEREA.

THE incident of the Sabbath meal, in the house of the Pharisee, had occurred as Jesus was journeying by slow stages towards Jerusalem. He had long ago felt that to go thither would be to die; but His death, in whatever part of the country He might be apprehended, was already determined by His enemies, and it was necessary for the future of His Kingdom that He should not perish obscurely, like John, in some lonely fortress, but with such publicity, and so directly by the hands of the upholders of the Old Theocracy, as to leave their deliberate rejection of His teaching in no doubt, and to bring home to them the guilt of His death.

Yet He was in no hurry. It was still some time till the Passover, and He advanced leisurely on His sad journey, through the different villages and towns, teaching in the synagogues on the Sabbaths, and anywhere, day by day, through the week. Meanwhile, the miracles which He wrought before continually increasing multitudes excited in Herod, the local ruler, the same fear of a political rising as had led him to imprison the Baptist.

In spite of our Lord's earnest effort to discourage excitement, by damping every worldly hope or ambition in the crowds that followed Him, and leaving no question of His utter refusal to carry out the national programme of a political Messiah, Herod was so alarmed that he made efforts to apprehend Him. Had the throngs increased with His advance from place to place, as they well might, so shortly before the Passover, He would have entered Jerusalem with a whole army of partisans, and compromised Himself at once with the Roman authorities.

He, therefore, spared no efforts to discourage and turn back to their homes those whom He saw attracted to Him from other than spiritual motives. He wished none to follow Him who had not counted the cost of doing so, and had not realized His unprecedented demands from His disciples. Instead of courting popular support, now that His life was in such danger, He raised these demands, and refused to receive followers on any terms short of absolute self-surrender and self-sacrifice to His cause, though He had nothing whatever to offer in return beyond the inward satisfaction of conscience, and a reward in the future world, if the surrender had been the absolutely sincere and disinterested expression of personal devotion to Himself.

"Consider well," said He, "before you follow me farther. I desire no one to do so who does not without reserve devote himself to me and my cause. He must tear himself from all his former con-

nections and associations, and offer up, as a willing sacrifice, the claims of father, mother, wife, children, brother, or sister—and even his own life, if necessary, that he may be in no way hindered from entire devotion to me and my commands. Short of this, no one can be my disciple. Nor can he who is not willing to bear shame and suffering for my sake. You cannot be my disciples unless you are ready to be virtually condemned to die for being so; unless, as it were, you already put on your shoulders the weight of the cross on which you are to be nailed for confessing my name.

"It is, indeed, no light matter, but needs the gravest consideration. You know how men weigh everything beforehand in affairs of cost or danger: much more is it needful to do so in this case. No man would be so foolish as to begin building a house without first finding out the cost, and seeing if he can meet it. He will not lay the foundation, and run the risk of not being able to do more, for he knows that to do so would make him the scoff of his neighbours. Nor would any king or prince, at war with another, march out against him, without thinking whether he could likely, with ten thousand men, overcome an enemy coming with twice as many. If he feel that the chances are against him, he will seek to make peace before his enemy come near, and will send an embassy to him to propose conditions. No less, but rather much more, careful consideration of the dangers you run; of the greatness of my demands; of the losses you must endure; of the shame and suffering certain to follow—are needed before casting in your lot with me.

"Yet, as I have said elsewhere, before; it is the noblest of all callings to be my disciple, if you really can accept my conditions. For to him who is truly my follower, it is given of God to keep alive and spread the spiritual life of men, as salt keeps sound and fresh that which is seasoned by it. My disciples are designed by God to be the Spiritual Salt of the Earth. But if the honour be greater, so much the greater is the responsibility; for if a follower of mine, through hankering after worldly interests, lose his spiritual life and thus lose his power to further my cause, how can he hope to regain it? He is like salt that has lost its strength, and, as such worthless salt is cast out of men, so he will be cast out of God, from the kingdom of the Messiah, at the great day. He who is thoughtful, let him think of all this!"

A great English writer has pictured an imaginary character as having a sweet look of goodness, which drew out all that was good in others. There must have been some such divine attraction to the poor and outcast in the looks and whole person of our Lord. India is not more caste-ridden than the Judea in which He lived. The aristocracy of religion looked with hatred and disdain on the masses of their own nation, and with bitterness still deeper on all men of foreign birth. The ruin of long, disastrous years of civil war and foreign domination, had covered the land with misery. The reign

of the Herods had been a continued effort to rebuild burned towns, and restore exhausted finances; but the Roman tax-gatherer had followed, vampire-like, and had drained the nation of its life-blood, till it was sinking, as all Roman provinces sank, sooner or later, into general decay. In a land thus doubly afflicted by social proscription, and by ever-increasing social distress—a land of mutual hatreds and wrongs—the suffering multitudes hailed with instinctive enthusiasm one who, like Jesus, ignored baleful prejudices; taught the sunken and hopeless to respect themselves still, by showing that He, at least, still spoke kindly and hopefully to them, in all their sinfulness and misery; and by His looks and words, no less than by His acts, seemed to beckon the unfortunate to gather round Him as their friend. It must have spread far and wide, from His first entrance on His ministry, that He had chosen a publican as one of His inmost circle of disciples, and that He had not disdained to mingle with the most forlorn and sunken of the nation, even in the friendliness of the table or the cottage. From many a windowless hovel, where the smoke of the household fire made its way out only by the door, and the one earth-floored apartment was shared by the wretched family, with the fowls, or even beasts they chanced to own—a hovel which the priest or Rabbi would have died rather than defile himself by entering—the story spread how the great Galilæan teacher had not only entered, but had done so to raise the dying, and to bless the living. All over the land it ran from mouth to mouth that, for the first time, a great Rabbi had appeared who was no respecter of persons, but let Himself be anointed by a poor penitent sinner, and sat in the booth with a hated publican, and mingled freely in the market-place with the crowds whose very neighbourhood others counted pollution. Still more, it was felt by the proscribed millions, the Cagots and Pariahs of a merciless theocracy, that He was their champion, by the very fact that He was deemed an enemy by the dominant caste; for opposition to it was loyalty to them.

Hence, the multitudes who, on this last journey, especially, gathered round Jesus with friendly sympathy and readiness to receive His instructions, were largely composed of the degraded and despised—the "publicans and sinners" from far and near. The Rabbis enjoined that a teacher should keep utterly aloof from such people, "even if one had the worthy design of exhorting them to read the Law"—that is, even with the view of reclaiming them. It was a sign that wisdom did not dwell with one if he went near the thief or the usurer, even when they had turned from their evil ways. The superstitious reverence demanded for those who kept the Rabbinical laws strictly, was only equalled by the intense loathing of the ignorant commonalty. No Rabbi, or Rabbi's scholar, might on any account marry a daughter of the Am-ha-aretz—or unlearned—for the gross multitude were an abomination, and their wives loathsome vermin; and the most repulsive crime known to the Law was no worse

than to marry among them. No one might walk on a journey with a "common man." It was sternly forbidden to pollute the Law by being seen to read it before one. Their witness was refused in the Jewish courts, and it was prohibited to give testimony in their favour: no secret was to be told them: they could not be guardians of orphans, nor allowed to have charge of the alms-box of the synagogue; and if they lost anything, no notice of its having been found was to be given them.

No wonder that the Rabbis, and the hierarchical party at large, owned that "the hatred of the common people towards the 'wise' was greater than that of the heathen towards Israel, and that the wives hated the dominant caste even more fiercely than their husbands."

That Jesus should outrage the established laws of privilege and exclusiveness, by allowing those to follow Him whom Rabbis would not allow to approach them, and, still worse, by receiving them kindly, and eating with them, was a bitter offence to the Pharisees and scribes. In their eyes, He was degrading Himself by consorting with the "unclean and despicable." Nor could they say anything more fitted to excite the mortal hatred of their class against Him.

The storm of bitter murmurings evelong reached the ears of our Lord, and He at once seized the opportunity to define His position unmistakably, and show that the course He took was in keeping with His whole aim.

"Let me ask you," said He, to some irritated Rabbis, who murmured at seeing Him, on one occasion, surrounded by "publicans and sinners," "who of you, if he had a flock of a hundred sheep, and one of them were to go astray, would not leave the ninety and nine on the pastures, and go off after the one that was lost, till he found it? And when he had done so, would he not lay it on his shoulders gladly, and carry it back to the flock? and, when he had come home, would he not call together his friends and neighbours, to rejoice with him at his having found the sheep that was lost?

"You scribes and Pharisees,—Rabbis,—lawyers,—think you are so righteous, that you need no repentance. You speak of some of your number, as having never committed a sin in their lives; of some whose only sin has been such a thing as having once put the phylacteries on his forehead before those on his arm; and call some the 'perfectly righteous.' Let me tell you, that all men as such are the great flock of God,—for all are His sons,—and that when one who has gone astray, and has lived in sin, comes to himself and repents, there is greater joy in heaven over his return, than over ninety and nine, who, like you, think they have no need of repentance. And if this be the case in heaven, how much more ought I, here on earth, to rejoice that many such penitent ones come to me, than at your coming in proud self-sufficiency to boast that you need nothing at my hand."

"Or," continued He, "I ask you,—suppose a poor woman who

had only ten drachmæ, were to lose one in one of the dark windowless hovels, in which so many of our people in these evil days live, would she not light a lamp and sweep the floor over, and spare no pains in seeking till she found it? And when she had found it, would she not call together her friends and neighbours, and ask them to rejoice with her for having found the drachma that was lost? In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, in the highest heaven, over one such sinner as those you so bitterly despise, who turns and repents. Well, therefore, may I gladly receive them, and mingle with them, when they come to me to learn the way back to God.

"Let me tell you a parable.

"A certain man had two sons. And the younger of these said to his father,—'Father, give me I pray you, the portion of the property that falls to me. I am the younger son, and inherit only half as much as my elder brother, but I pray you let me have it.' The father, on this, divided between the two all his living, retaining, however, the larger share of the elder son in his hands till his own death, as he might have done with that of the younger son also. *His* share, however, he gave into the young man's own hands.

"But before long, the younger son began to dislike the restraint of his father's house, and gathering all together, set off for a distant country, and there gave his passions the reins, and lived in such riot, that erelong his whole means were scattered. But, now, when he had spent his all, a great famine arose in the country, and he began to be in distress. At last it went so hard with him, that he was glad to ask one of the citizens to give him anything at all to do, whatever it was, to get bread. He was, thereupon, sent into the man's fields, to be his swineherd, a sadly shameful occupation for a Jew! Yet, after all, he did not get even his food for which he had bargained, for neither his master nor any one else thought of him, and he was left to starve. He even longed to fill himself with the pods of the carob-tree, which are fed out to swine, and are sometimes eaten by the very poor, but no man gave him any even of them.

"In his loneliness and sore trouble, he began to reflect. 'How many labourers and household servants of my father,' said he to himself, 'have more bread than they can eat, while I, his son, am dying here of want. I will arise, and go back to my father, and will confess my guilt and unworthiness, and tell him how deeply I feel that I have sinned against heaven and done great wrong towards him. I will say that I feel I am no longer worthy to be called his son, and will ask him to treat me like one of his hired labourers, and will tell him that I will gladly work with them for my daily bread, so that he receive me again.'

"He had no sooner resolved to do this, than he rose to return to his father's house. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and knew him, and ran out to meet him, full of tender com-

passion, and fell on his neck and kissed him tenderly. And the son said to him, 'I have sinned against God and against thee, and am not worthy that thou shouldst any longer call me thy son.' He could not say what he had intended besides, when he saw how fondly his father bent over him, notwithstanding his sins and folly. Nor was more needed; for his father called out to his servants, 'Bring me a robe, the best there is, that he may have my finest; and put it on him; and put a ring on his finger, and sandals on his feet; he shall no longer, like a slave, be without either; and bring the fatted calf and kill it. We shall have a feast to-day and be merry, for my son; lost and dead, as I thought, in a strange land, is once more home: dead by his sins, he is alive again by repentance: a lost wanderer, he has returned to the fold.'

"The elder son, meanwhile, had been in the field with the labourers, but now came towards home. And as he drew near, he heard music and dancing. Calling one of the servants, he thereupon asked what had happened, and was told that his brother had come home, and that his father was so glad to have him once more safe and sound, that he had had the best calf killed, and given for a feast to the household.

"But now, instead of rejoicing over his brother's return, the elder son took amiss such gladness of his father, at having him safely back again, and would not go into the house at all, or take any part in the rejoicings. The father, therefore, ever kind and gentle, went out to him to soothe him, and to beg him to come in. All he could say, however, failed to soften his heart, and he vented his discontent in angry reproaches: 'I have served you for many a year, more like a slave than a son, and have obeyed you in every particular, and yet you never gave me a kid, far less a fatted calf, that I might have a little enjoyment with my friends. But when this fellow, who is indeed your son, though I will not call him my brother,—this fellow who has spent your money on harlots,—has come back, you have killed the fatted calf for him.'

"'My son,' replied the father, mildly, 'have you forgotten that you have been always by my side, while your brother has been far away from me, or that all that I have belongs to you as my heir? Surely all this should raise you above such hard judgments and jealous thoughts. What could we do but rejoice when a long-lost son has come back again to his father's house?'"

The parables of the Lost Sheep and of the Lost Piece of Silver had been enforced by the noblest of all the parables. Henceforth, for all ages, it was proclaimed beyond the possibility of misconception, that, in the teaching of Jesus, God looks with unspeakably greater favour on the penitent humility of "the sinner," with its earnest of gratitude and love, than on cold correctness in which the heart has no place.

We are indebted to St. Luke for some other fragments of the teaching of these last weeks.

Among the great multitudes who had thronged after Him, the publicans of the district were especially noticeable. Many of them were, doubtless, in a good position in life, and some even rich, but all were exposed to peculiar temptations in their hated calling. Not a few seem to have listened earnestly to the first Teacher who had ever treated them as men with souls to save, and it was of the greatest importance to them that they should have wise and true principles for their future guidance. The following parable seems to have been delivered specially to them, as part of an address when they had gathered in more than usual numbers.

"A certain rich man had a steward, to whom he left the entire charge of his affairs. He learned, however, from some sources, that this man was acting dishonestly by him, and scattering his goods; so he called him and let him know what he had heard, telling him, at the same time, to make out and settle all his accounts, as he could no longer hold his office.

"The steward, knowing that he was guilty, was at a loss what to do. 'I cannot dig,' said he, to himself, 'for I have not been accustomed to it, and I am ashamed to beg.' At last he hit on a plan which he thought would serve his end, and at once set himself to carry it out. Going to all his master's tenants, one by one, he asked each how much rent or dues he had to pay, though, in fact, he knew all this beforehand. When told, he pretended to have been commissioned, in compliance with his own suggestion, to lower the amount in each case; and he thus secured the favour of all. For example, he went to one and asked him 'How much owest thou to my lord?' and when told 'A hundred pipes of oil,' bade him take back his bill, and write another, instead, for fifty. A second, who owed a hundred quarters of wheat, he told to make out a fresh writing with only eighty. In this way, by leading them to think him their benefactor, he made sure of friends, who would open their houses to him when he had been dismissed.

"Some time after, when his master heard how cleverly he had secured his own ends, he could not help admiring his shrewdness. And, in truth, it is a fact, that bad men like this steward—the sons of this world—not of the next—are wiser in their dealings with their fellows, than the sons of light—my disciples—are in theirs with their brethren, sons of my heavenly Kingdom, like themselves.

"As the master of that steward commended him for his prudence, though it was so worldly and selfish, I, also, must commend to you a prudence of a higher kind in your relations to the things of this life. By becoming my disciples, you have identified yourselves with the interest of another Master than Mammon, the god of this world—whom you have hitherto served—and have before you another course and aim in life. You will be represented to your former master as no longer faithful to him, for my service is so utterly opposed to that of Mammon that, if faithful to me you cannot be faithful to him, and

he will, in consequence, assuredly take your stewardship of this world's goods from you—that is, sink you in poverty, as I have often said. I counsel you, therefore, so to use the goods of Mammon—the worldly means still at your command—that, by truly worthy distribution of them to your needy brethren—and my disciples are mostly poor—you may make friends for yourselves, who, if they die before you, will welcome you to everlasting habitations in heaven, when you pass thither, at death. Fit yourselves, by labours of love and deeds of true charity, as my followers, to become fellow-citizens of the heavenly mansions with those whose wants you have relieved while they were still in life.

"If you be faithful, thus, in the use of your possessions on earth, you will be deemed worthy by God to be entrusted with infinitely greater riches hereafter, in heaven, for he that is faithful in this lesser stewardship, has shown that he will be so in a higher, but he who has misused the lesser, cannot hope to be entrusted with a greater. If you show, in your life, that you have not been faithful to God in the use of this world's goods, entrusted to you by Him to administer for His glory, how can you hope that He will commit to your keeping the unspeakably grander trust of heavenly riches? If you have proved unfaithful in the stewardship of what was not yours —the worldly means lent you for a time by God—how can you hope to be honoured with the great trust of eternal salvation, which would have been yours had you proved yourself fit for it?

"Be assured that if you do not use your earthly riches faithfully for God, by dispensing them as I have told you, you will never enter my heavenly Kingdom at all. You will have shown that you are servants of Mammon, and not the servants of God; for it is impossible for any man to serve two masters."

Such unworldly counsels, so contrary to their own spirit, were received with contemptuous ridicule by the Pharisees standing round, as the mere dreams of a crazed enthusiast. The love of money had become a characteristic of their decaying religiousness, and it seemed to them the wildest folly to advise the rich, as their truest wisdom, to use their wealth to make friends for the future world, instead of enjoying it here. It is quite possible, indeed, that some of them felt the words of Christ as a personal reproof, and were all the more embittered.

Patient as He was in the endurance of personal wrongs and insults, the indignation of Jesus was roused at such sneers at the first principles of genuine religion, and He, at once, with the calm fearlessness habitual to Him, exposed their hypocrisy and unsafeness as spiritual guides.

"You hold your heads high," said He, "and affect to be saints, before men—such perfect patterns of piety, indeed, that you may judge all men by yourselves.

"But God, who knows all things, and judges, not by the outward

appearance, but by the heart, knows how different you are in reality from what you make men believe. Your pretended holiness, which is so highly thought of by men, is an abomination before God. You ignore, or explain away the commands of His law, when they do not suit you, and thus are mere actors, for true godliness honours the whole Law. I condemn you on the one ground on which you claim to be most secure. You demand honour for your strict obedience to the Law; I charge you with hypocrisy, for your designed and deliberate corruption of that Law, to suit yourselves.

"Sincerity is demanded from those who wish to serve God. That which Moses and the Prophets so long announced.—that to which all the Scriptures point, the Kingdom of the Messiah—has come. From the time when the Baptist preached, that kingdom is no longer future, but is set up in your midst, and with what success! Every one presses with eagerness into it. But, as you know, I, its Head and King, make the most searching demands from those who would enter it, and open its citizenship only to those who are willing to overcome all difficulties to obtain it. You charge me with breaking the Law, but, so far from doing so, I require that the whole Law, in its truest sense, be obeyed by every one who seeks to enter the New Kingdom. It is easier for heaven and earth, I tell men, to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law to lose its force. But how different is it with you! Take the one single case of divorce. What loose examples does not the conduct of some of your own class supply? what conflicting opinions do you not give on the question? I claim that the words of the Law be observed to the letter, and maintain, in opposition to your hollow morality, that any one who puts away his wife, except for adultery, and marries another, himself commits adultery, and that he who marries the woman thus divorced is also guilty of the same crime. Judge by this whether you or I most honour the Law—whether you or I are the safer guides of the people. How God must despise your boasts of special zeal for His glory!

"But that, notwithstanding your sneers, you may feel the truth of what I have just said as to the results of the possession of riches, when they are not employed as I have counselled—to make friends for yourselves, who will welcome you to heaven hereafter, let me tell you a parable.

"There was a certain rich man who dressed in robes of fine purple —the raiment of princes—over garments of the costliest Egyptian cotton, which only the most luxurious can buy.

"There was also, in the same place, a poor diseased beggar named Lazarus, who had been brought and set down, as an object of charity, before the gates of the great man's mansion, where he lay helpless, day after day; so abject, that he longed to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. But the rich man, though he often saw him, and knew his case, showed him no kindness, and instead of helping the sufferer, and thus making a friend with his money, who should

help him hereafter, as I advise; had no thought except of himself, and of his own pleasure. The poor man's case was indeed pitiful; he could not even drive away the unclean dogs, which, day by day, came and increased his pain by licking his sores.

"It came to pass, after a time, that Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels to Paradise, and there set down next to Abraham on the banqueting couches, at the feast in the kingdom of God, with his head in the great patriarch's bosom—the highest place of honour that Paradise could give.

"Erelong, the rich man also died, and, unlike Lazarus, whom men had left uncared for, even in his death, he was honoured with a sumptuous funeral.

"He, also, passed to Hades; not, however, to that part of it where Paradise is, but to Gehenna, the place of pain and torment in the world of shades. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham in the far distance, in the banqueting hall of bliss, with Lazarus reclining next him, in his bosom, as his most honoured friend. And he knew them both, and remembered how Lazarus had lain at his gate, and thought of this as a bond between them. 'O Father Abraham,' cried he, in his torments, 'have mercy on my agony, I beseech thee, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.' So great had been the change in their positions, that now the despised beggar was entreated to do even so small a favour to him from whom he himself had once looked for any favour in vain! Dives would fain make friends with Lazarus now, but could not bethink him of any good deed he had ever done him to help him to do so.

"Abraham now called this to his mind. 'Son,' said he, 'wonder not that you and Lazarus are in such opposite conditions here, from those you had when in life. You, then, had as much earthly happiness as you could enjoy: you had it, and set your heart on it, and lived only for yourself. Had you used your wealth as a godly man, in doing good to those, like Lazarus, who needed pity, instead of lavishing it on splendour and self-indulgence, you would have had good laid up for you now. But you lived only for earth, and the good you chose has been left behind you. You made your portion in your lifetime, and have none here. But Lazarus endured, while still alive, the sufferings allotted him, and he has none in this state. Penitent and lowly, he bore them patiently, as a child of God, and is now receiving the reward of the poor in spirit. His position and yours are reversed, for he now finds consolation and joy, in exchange for his earthly misery, but you, pain and sorrow, instead of your self-indulgence.'

"'Besides all this,' added he, 'between this happy abode and yours, there is a great space, across which no one can pass, either from us to you, or from you to us, so that it is impossible that you should have any share in our joy, or that we can in any way lessen your pain.'

"Now, for the first time, the rich man saw the full extent of his misery, and its cause. 'Would that I had acted differently,' cried he, 'when in life. Would that, instead of living for myself—hard, impenitent, selfish—I had been lowly and penitent, using my wealth as God enjoined, in blessing the wretched. I should then have been welcomed by Lazarus, and such as he, into the everlasting habitations of Paradise!'

"'But, oh! Father Abraham,' he continued, 'let me be the only one of my father's house to come into this doleful place. Send Lazarus, I beseech thee, back to earth, to my father's house, for I have five brethren, who live as I lived. It would add unspeakably to my pain if they also came to this abode of woe. Oh! let Lazarus go and warn them of what has befallen me, their brother.'

"'To escape your sad doom,' replied Abraham, 'they must needs repent, and live the life of the godly. But for this the Law and the Prophets are the appointed means; let them listen to them.'

"'Nay, Father Abraham,' answered the lost one, 'that is not enough. It did not move me to repentance. But if a dead man returned again from the grave, and came to them, and told them how it was with me here, they would be alarmed, and reform.'

"'You err, my unhappy son,' said Abraham, closing the scene. 'It would not move them in the least, for so amply are the Scriptures fitted to persuade men to repentance, that those whom they do not win to it would not be persuaded even if one rose from the dead.'"

The Rabbis had listened to the parable, but it touched their own failing too pointedly to make them care for any longer conference with Jesus. When they were gone—it may be while He was resting with the Twelve in the cool of the evening—the incidents of the whole day were passed in review, and Jesus noticed that the words and bearing of His opponents, respect for whom, as the teachers of the nation, was instinctive with every Jew—had not been without their effect even on His disciples. It was evident that the very nature of His demands—the trials and persecutions to come, and the weakness of human nature—would raise moral hindrances to the full and abiding loyalty of not a few.

By way of caution, therefore, He now warned them on this point. "It is impossible," said He, "to prevent divisions, disputes, and even desertion and apostasy, on the part of some of you, in the evil times to come. Misrepresentation, prejudice, the bent of different minds; the weakness of some, and the unworthiness of others, will inevitably produce their natural results. The progress of my kingdom will, I foresee, be hindered more or less from this cause, but it cannot be avoided. Yet, woe to him who thus hinders the spread and glory of the Truth. It were better for him, if, like the worst criminal, he were bound to a heavy millstone, and cast into the sea, than that he should cause a single simple child-like soul, who be-

lieves in me, to fall. Take heed that you neither mislead nor are misled! Remember that I tell you that offences must be prevented or removed by a lowly forgiving spirit on your part. You know how far you are yet from this; how strong pride, love of your own opinion, harshness, and impatience, still are in your hearts. To further my Kingdom when I am gone, strive above all things for peace and love among yourselves.

"The one grand means of avoiding these causes of offence and spiritual ruin is unwearied, forgiving love; by that frame of mind which you see so wholly wanting in the Rabbis, that they have even now murmured at my so much as speaking to sinners, from whom such simple, lowly brethren are to be gathered. If such an one sin against you, and turn away from your fellowship, rebuke him for his sin, but if he see his error and repent of it, and come back, forgive him; aye, even if he wrong you seven times in a day, and feel and acknowledge his error and promise amendment, as often, you must each time forgive him freely."

The Twelve had listened to these counsels with intense interest, but their moral grandeur almost discouraged them. They felt that nothing is harder than constant patience and loving humility—never returning evil for evil, but ever ready to forgive, even when repeatedly injured without cause. It needed, as they feared, stronger faith than they yet had, to create such an abiding spirit of tender meekness. They had talked over the whole matter, and saw only one source of strength. Coming to their Master, full of confidence in His divine power to grant their request, they openly, and with a sweet humility, prayed Him that He would increase their faith.

"This request," answered Jesus, "shows that faith, in a true and worthy sense, is yet to be begun in your hearts. If you had it, even in a small measure, or, to use a phrase you hear every day, as a grain of mustard-seed; instead of finding obedience to these counsels too difficult, you would undertake and perform even apparent impossibilities—acts of trust which demand the highest spiritual power and strength. To use words which you have often heard as an illustration of acts naturally impossible, you would say to this sycamore or mulberry-tree, 'Be thou plucked up by the roots and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you—that is, you would be able to do what, without faith, seems as impossible.

"To such efficiency and eminence in my service will true faith in ME lead you: but beware, amidst all, of any thought of merit of your own. Your faith must grow, and cannot be given as a mere bounty from without: it is a result of your own spiritual development and true humility, which looks away from self to me, as the one condition of this advancement. You shall have the increased faith you seek, but it will be only by your continued loving dependence on me, your Master. If any of you had a servant ploughing or tending your flock, would you say to him when he comes home from the field in

the evening, 'Come near immediately, and sit down to meat?' Would you not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, and make yourself fit to wait on me at table, and after I have supped, you shall eat and drink?' Would you think yourself under obligation to the servant because he has been working for you, or because he waits on you as required? Assuredly not, for your servant had only done what it was right he should do as a servant. Be, you, such servants. There is a daily work, with prescribed tasks, required from you. The great supper will not be till this life is ended; but when it is ended, you must not think of yourselves, on account of it, except as becomes servants; and should you be rewarded or honoured, you must not forget, that it is only from my free favour, and not as payment of any claim; because, in fact, you have done only what it was your duty, as servants, to do. The servant who does less than his duty, is guilty before his master, but he who has done his duty, though he has avoided blame, has no reason to think himself entitled to reward. Feel, therefore, in any case, that your work has not been beyond your rightful duty, and that, though you have escaped condemnation, you have no claim for any merit."

The hostility of the Rabbis was growing daily more bitter, after each fruitless attack. At each town or village they gathered round Him, and harassed him at every step by attempts to compromise Him with the authorities.

On one of these last days of His journey towards Jerusalem, a knot of Pharisees had, thus, forced themselves on Him, and sought to elicit something that might serve them, by asking Him—

"Master, you have often represented yourself, both by word and by mighty deeds, as the Messiah, but we see no signs as yet of the coming of the kingdom of God. When will it come? It has been long promised."

"The kingdom of God," answered Jesus, "is something entirely different from what you expect. You look for a great political revolution, and the establishment of a Jewish empire, with its capital in Jerusalem. Instead of this, it is a spiritual kingdom, in the hearts and consciences of men, and, as such, cannot come with the outward display and circumstance of earthly monarchy, so that men may say, 'Lo, here is the kingdom of God,' or, 'lo, there.' The coming of the kingdom develops itself unobserved. I cannot, therefore, give you any moment when it may be said to have come, for, in fact, it is already in your midst. I, the Messiah, live and work amongst you, and where the Messiah is, there is His kingdom. There, already, is it steadily advancing, after its nature, like the seed in the ground, like the grain of mustard-seed, or, like the leaven in a woman's measure of meal."

The malevolent question thus met a reply which at once balked curiosity, and laid on all the most solemn responsibilities; for if the Messiah was really among them, how imperative to fit themselves for

entering His kingdom! The interrogators, finding their sinister effort vain, presently left, and, when thus alone, Jesus resumed the subject with His disciples.

"I have only spoken to these men," said He, "of the growth and development of my kingdom, unseen, and silently, in the hearts of men. To you I would now speak of the future. Days will come when trouble shall make men's hearts long for one of the days of the Son of Man back again, and false Messiahs will rise, pretending to bring deliverance. But when they say to you, 'Lo, there is the Messiah come at last,' or, 'Lo, here He is,' go not out after them; do not follow them. For the coming of the Son of Man will be as sudden, as striking to all eyes, as mighty in its power, as when the lightning leaps from the cloud and suddenly sets the whole heavens in flame. There is no need of asking of the lightning 'Where is it?' or for any to tell you of it.

"But this coming will not be now. I must first suffer many things from this generation, and be rejected by it. Far from approaching with slow royal pomp, seen and welcomed from afar; far from the world hailing my coming, and preparing for it, as for that of an expected king: they will be busied in their ordinary affairs when it is nearest; till, suddenly, wide ruin and judgment burst on them, as the flood on the men of the days of Noah, and the fire from heaven on Sodom, in the days of Lot, bringing destruction on all. Men lived in security then; they ate and drank; they married and gave in marriage, with no thought or preparation for the impending catastrophe.

"It will be the same at my coming. Men will be as secure; the day will burst on them as suddenly, when I shall be revealed in my glory. When it comes, there will be an awful and instant separation of man from man. The good and evil will no longer be mixed together. He who would save himself must, on the moment, part from those whom the peril threatens. He who lives in a town, must, as the destruction approaches, so hasten his flight, that if he be on the housetop when it draws near, he must not think of going into the house to save anything, but must flee, at the loss of all earthly possessions. He who is in the open field, must not turn back to his house for his goods, but must leave all behind him, and escape with his life. You hear my words: see that, in that day, you give heed to them. Remember Lot's wife, who perished for looking back, in disobedience to the divine command. Whosoever, in that day, shall seek to preserve his life, by unfaithfulness to me, shall lose life eternal, and he who loses this life for my sake, will secure heaven for ever.

"The separation of men, at my coming, will, indeed, be solemn! Those who spent this life together, will then find themselves parted for ever! I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other left; two poor slaves will be grinding flour for the household together; one will be taken and the other left."

The Twelve had listened with breathless attention to this vision of the future. They had heard much that was new, grand, and fearful, and they trembled with a natural fear at the awful picture set before them. "Where, Lord," asked they, "will the Messiah gather His own, that they may be safe? Where is the refuge in which those who love Thee will be received in that day?"

"Who says to the eagle," replied Jesus, "where the carcase is? His keen eyes see it from afar. Where the Messiah will be, and where the gathering place for the saved will be, they will see from afar for whom it is provided, and with swift flight will betake themselves thither."

The momentous earnestness with which Jesus had so often spoken of the difficulty of being truly His disciple had sunk into the hearts of many who heard it, and the free access to Himself He permitted, must often have been used to seek counsel on a point so momentous. It was, moreover, a passion with the Jew to speculate on every question of theology, as is seen in the vast system elaborated by the Rabbis. The mysteries of the future world especially engrossed them. By the multitude it was taken for granted that every Israelite, as such, would have a portion in heaven, but there were not a few others who, like Esdras, fancied that "The Most High had made this world for many, but the world to come for few: as He had made much common earth, but little gold." One in whom His words had raised such questions, took advantage, about this time, of His readiness to listen to their doubts and inquiries, to ask Him if more than a few only would be saved, since He had said it was so hard to be His follower. Instead of answering, directly, a question which could only gratify curiosity, Jesus, ever practical, gave His reply a turn which was much more useful.

"It would benefit you little," said He, "if I answered your question as you wish: the great matter for you is that many will not be saved, so that it becomes you to strive, with intense earnestness, to enter in through the narrow door that leads to eternal life; for many, I say unto you, who would like to enter at last, but do not thus strive now, will seek to do so when too late and will not be admitted. If once you be shut out from the kingdom of the Messiah, you will in vain plead your external connection with me now. When the great banquet of heaven begins, the Messiah will cause the door of the banqueting hall to be shut. If ye, then, come to it and knock at the door, saying 'Lord, open to us,' He will answer from within, 'I know you not, whence you are.' If you urge that He has forgotten you, and that, if He will bethink Him, He will recollect that you ate and drank in His presence, as companions at the same table, and that He had taught in your streets, He will only answer, 'I tell you I know you not, whence ye are. Depart from me, all ye workers of unrighteousness.'

"What weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there as ye stand,

thus, and see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast out! What wailing, when you see, instead of yourselves, the heathen you have so despised, come from the east, and west, and north, and south, and sit down at the great feast of heaven. Believe me, there are many who, now, before the setting up of my kingdom, are first, who, after it is set up, will be last; many, like the heathen who shall enter to the feast, who will become my disciples only late, and shall yet take a first place in my kingdom. See that ye press on while the door is still open to admit you."

Jesus had now been for some time in Perea, in the territory of Antipas, the murderer of John. The intense unpopularity of the crime had, doubtless, been a protection to Him, but there were many reasons why such a man should wish the great Wonder Worker, whom he personally feared so much, as, perhaps, the murdered Baptist, risen from the dead, fairly out of his dominions. Unwilling to appear in the matter, he used the Pharisees, counting on their readiness to further his end of getting rid of Him. Some of their number, therefore, came to Him, with the air of friends anxious for His safety, and warned Him that it would be well for Him to leave Perea as quickly as possible, as Herod desired to kill Him.

Jesus at once saw through the whole design, as a crafty plan of Herod himself to expel Him. He was on His way to Jerusalem, and contented Himself with showing that He gave no grounds for political suspicion, and that He quite well understood how little friendship there was in the advice the Pharisees had given Him.

"Go and tell that crafty fox," said He, "that I know why he is afraid of me, and wishes me out of his land. Tell him there is no cause for his alarm, for I do nothing to wake his suspicions. I have no designs that can injure him, but confine myself to driving demons from poor men possessed with them, and to healing the sick. These harmless labours I shall not intermit till the time I have fixed to give to them is over. It will take three days more to pass quite out of Perea, and for these three days I shall be in his territory, but on the third day I leave it, for I am now on my way to Jerusalem, to die there. Herod will not need to trouble himself to kill me, for it would be unfitting for a prophet to die outside the holy city." Such a message was virtually an intimation that He knew that it would be by the hands of those who pretended kindly to warn Him, and their allies, that He should perish, and not by those of Antipas.

The word Jerusalem, and the thought of the guilt of the city so tenderly loved by Him—guilt soon to be increased by His violent death at its hand, filled His heart with deep irrepressible emotion.

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem," cried He, in a louder voice, trembling with sadness—"it is thou, the City of the Temple, the City of the Great King, who killest the prophets, and stonest those whom God sends unto thee! Thou art still true to thine evil repute! How often,

oh, how often, thou mother of many children, would I have gathered them all round me safely, from the dangers before them; as the careful hen calls together her brood when the shadow of evil falls near, and spreads her wings over them, and guards them from every harm! But thou wouldst not let me do thee this service. For what shall come on thee thou must, thyself, bear the blame! The divine protection I would have given thee thou hast refused and hast lost, not will I appear in thy desolation as thy helper. Thou wilt not see me till I come to set up in thee my Kingdom, and receive thy homage, no longer to be denied,—as the Messiah, the Blessed, who comes in the name of the Lord!"

CHAPTER LIV.

IN PEREA—(*Continued*).

THE lofty demands of Jesus from His followers had filled the Twelve with doubts and misgivings of their power to fulfil them. A continuous self-denial, which thought only of their Master, and a patient love which returned meekness and good for evil and injury, were graces slowly attained; how much more so when they could only strike root in the heart after the dislodgement of hereditary prejudices and modes of thought?

A sense of weakness had already led them to ask that their faith in Jesus as the Messiah; able to aid them in all their straits and trials; might be strengthened. The utterance of that faith in prayer was no less necessary, at once to obtain the grace needed to bear them through difficulties, and to raise them to a steadfast confidence in the triumphant manifestation of their Master's Kingdom, of which He had more than once spoken. Lest they should grow slack in this great duty, He reminded them that their whole frame of mind should be one of habitual devotion, that they might not become faint-hearted, and give way before the trials they might have to suffer, or at the seeming delay in His coming. His words, as usual, took the form of a parable.

"There was in a city," said He, "a judge, who neither feared God nor reverenced man. And there was also a widow in that city who had an enemy from whom she could hope to get free only by the interposition of the judge. So she came often to him, asking him to do justice to her, and maintain her right against her adversary. But he paid no attention, for a long time, to her suit. At last, however, he could bear her constant coming no longer, and said within himself—'Though I should do it as my duty, that does not trouble me, for I do not pretend to fear God, and care nothing for man. Yet this widow torments me. I shall therefore do what is right in her case for my own sake, for otherwise she will perfectly weary me by her constant appeals.'

"So, the widow, by her importunity, obtained her end, at last.

"Hear what the unjust judge says! But if men thus get what is right, even from the worst, if they urge their suit long enough, with sufficient earnestness; how can any one doubt that God, the Righteous One, will give heed to the cry of His Saints for all they have to suffer? Will He not much rather, though He let the enemy rage for what seems a long time, surely, at the great day, avenge the wrongs of His elect, who are so dear to Him, and thus cry in prayer night and day?

"I tell you, He will be patient towards them, though they thus cry to Him continually, for He is not wearied with their complaints, as the unjust judge was with those of the widow; and He will deliver them from their enemies, without and within, and give them a portion in the Kingdom of the Messiah, and that speedily. For when the Messiah comes it will seem as if the waiting for Him had only been brief. But when He thus comes, will He find any who still look for Him, and believe that the promise of His return will be fulfilled? Will my disciples endure to the end; or can it be that they will fall away before all their trials?"

To one of these last days in Perea we are indebted for the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Jesus had spoken much of prayer, but the religion of the day was so largely mechanical, that they were in danger of mistaking the outward form for the substance. Only repeated lessons could guard them from the lifeless formality of the Rabbis, with whom the most sacred duties had sunk to cold outward rites. Self-righteous pride, moreover, was the characteristic of much of the current religiousness, and was, in fact, a natural result of the externalism prevailing. To show the true nature of devotion pleasing to God, He related the following parable:—

"Two men," said He, "went up at the same time, the hour of prayer, to the Temple, to pray. The one was a Pharisee, the other a Publican. The Pharisee, who had seen the Publican enter the Temple with him, stood apart; his eyes towards the Holy of Holies, and began to pray thus—'O God, I thank Thee that I do not belong to the common multitude of mankind, whom Thou hast rejected—to the covetous, the unjust, the adulterous. I thank Thee that I am not what so many men are, what this Publican, here before Thee, is. He knows nothing of fasting or of tithes, but I fast every Monday and every Thursday, and I give the Priests and Levites the tenth, not only of all I have, but of all I may gain, which is more than the Law requires.'

"The Publican, meanwhile, feeling that he was a sinner, stopped far behind the Pharisee, coming no further into the sacred court than its very edge; for he shrank from a near approach to God. Nor could he dare, in his lowly penitence, to lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, far less his head and his hands, but, with bent head, smote on his breast in his sorrow, and said—'God be merciful to me the sinner.'

"The Pharisee had offered only a proud, cold thanksgiving for his own merits; the Publican an humble cry for mercy.

"Believe me, this Publican, whom the Pharisee gave a place among the extortionate, the unjust and the impure, received favour from God, and returned to his home forgiven and accepted; but the Pharisee went away unjustified. For, as I have often said, every one who thinks highly of himself in religious things will be humbled before God, and he who humbles himself will be honoured before Him."

Among the questions of the day fiercely debated between the great rival schools of Hillel and Schammai, no one was more so than that of divorce. The school of Hillel contended that a man had a right to divorce his wife for any cause he might assign, if it were no more than his having ceased to love her, or his having seen one he liked better, or her having cooked a dinner badly. The school of Schammai, on the contrary, held that divorce could be issued only for the crime of adultery, and offences against chastity. If it were possible to get Jesus to pronounce in favour of either school, the hostility of the other would be roused, and, hence, it seemed a favourable chance for compromising Him, to broach this subject for His opinion.

Some of the Pharisees, therefore, took an opportunity of raising the question. "Is it lawful," they asked, "to put away one's wife, when a man thinks fit, for any cause he is pleased to assign? Or, do you think there are exceptions to this rule?"

There could be no doubt that the lofty morality of Jesus would condemn a mere human custom which was corrupting the whole civil and domestic life of the nation, and undermining all honour, chastity, and love. He had already answered the question fully, in the Sermon on the Mount, in which He had taught that arbitrary divorce was not permitted; but that was long since, and He was now in a different part of the country. It was quite in accordance with the habit of the day to appeal to any Rabbi on a disputed religious question, or scruple, on lighter or weightier points; it gratified the universal love for controversy, and gave an opportunity for showing dialectical wit and sharpness. But the questioners gained little by trying their skill on Jesus.

"Have you never read," answered He, "that the Creator of men made man and woman at the same time, in the very beginning of our race, and gave them to each other as husband and wife? And do you not know that so intimate was the relation thus instituted, that, close though the connection be between parents and children, God has said that that between man and wife is so much closer, that a son, who, before, was under his parents, and was bound more closely to them than to any other persons in the world, is to separate himself from his father and mother when he marries, and to form a still nearer relationship with his wife—such a relationship that the two shall become, as it were, one. As soon as a man and woman are married, therefore, the two make, together, only one being. But since it is God who has joined them thus, divorce is the putting asunder by man of what God has made into one. Marriage is a sacred union, and man is not to regard it as something which he can undo at his pleasure."

Nothing could be said against this from natural grounds, but the objection lay ready that the Law of Moses was not so strict, and a prospect offered of forcing Jesus either to contradict Himself, or to pronounce openly against the great founder of the nation. "If this be so," said they, "how comes it that Moses permitted a man to divorce his wife? for you know that he says that writings of divorcement might be given where a divorce was wished, and these dissolved the marriage."

"Moses," replied our Lord, "did, indeed, suffer you to put away your wives, to prevent a greater evil. He did so as a statesman and a law-giver, from the necessities of the age, which made any better law impracticable. Our fathers were too rude and headstrong to permit his doing more. But, though he did not prohibit divorce, because the feelings of the times did not allow him to do so, it does not follow from this that his action in this matter was the original law of the Creator, or that conscience and religion sanction such separations. I say, therefore, that whoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, which destroys the very essence of marriage by dissolving the oneness it had formed, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is put away for any other cause commits adultery, because the woman is still, in God's sight, wife of him who has divorced her."

This statement was of far deeper moment than the mere silencing of malignant spies. It was designed to set forth for all ages the law of His New Kingdom in the supreme matter of family life. It swept away for ever from His Society the conception of woman as a mere toy or slave of man, and based true relations of the sexes on the eternal foundation of truth, right, honour, and love. To ennoble the House and the Family by raising woman to her true position was essential to the future stability of His Kingdom, as one of purity and spiritual worth. By making marriage indissoluble He proclaimed the equal rights of woman and man within the limits of the family, and, in this, gave their charter of nobility to the mothers of the world. For her nobler position in the Christian era, compared with that granted her in antiquity, woman is indebted to Jesus Christ.

When an opportunity offered, the disciples asked fuller instruction on a matter so grave. Customs or opinions, supported, apparently, by a national law, and that law divine; customs, the rightness of which has never before been doubted, are hard to uproot, however good the grounds on which they are challenged. Hence, even the Twelve felt the strictness of the new law introduced by their Master respecting marriage, and frankly told Him, that if a man were bound to his wife as He had said, it seemed to them better not to marry.

"With respect to marrying or not marrying," replied Christ, "your saying that it is good for a man not to do so is one which cannot be received by all men, but only by those to whom the moral power to act on it has been given by God. Some do not marry from

natural causes, and there are some who voluntarily keep in the single state, that they may give themselves with an entire devotion to the service of my Kingdom. Let him among you who feels able to act on the lofty principle of denying himself the nobility and holiness of family life, that he may with more entire devotion consecrate himself to my service, do so." Self-sacrifice, in this, as in all things, was left by Jesus to the conscience and heart. Even His apostles were left free to marry or remain single, as they chose, nor can any depreciation of the married state be wrung from His words, except by a manifest perversion of their spirit.

It is significant that, in the South as in Galilee, the mothers of households, though not expressly named, turned with peculiar tenderness and reverence to the new Prophet and Rabbi. They were doubtless encouraged to do so by the sight of the women who now, as always, accompanied Him on His journeys; but the goodness that beamed in His looks, and breathed in His every word, drew them still more. Indifferent to the hard and often worthless disputes and questions which engaged the other sex, they sought only a blessing on the loved ones of their hearts and homes, contented if Jesus would lay His hands on their infants, and utter over them a word of blessing.

A beautiful custom led parents to bring their children at an early age to the Synagogue, that they might have the prayers and blessings of the elders. "After the father of the child," says the Talmud, "had laid his hands on his child's head, he led him to the elders, one by one, and they also blessed him, and prayed that he might grow up famous in the Law, faithful in marriage, and abundant in good works." Children were thus brought, also, to any Rabbi of special holiness, and hence they had been presented already more than once before Jesus. Now, on this, His last journey, little children were again brought to Him that He might put His hands on them, and pray for a blessing on their future life. To the disciples, however, it seemed only troubling their Master, and they chid the parents for bringing them. But the feeling of Christ to children was very different from theirs. To look into their innocent artless eyes must have been a relief after enduring those of spies and malignant enemies. He Himself had the ideal childlike spirit, and He delighted to see in little ones His own image. Purity, truthfulness, simplicity, sincerity, docility, and loving dependence shone out on Him from them, and made them at all times His favourite types for His followers. The Apostles needed the lessons their characteristics impressed, and though He had enforced them before, He gladly took every opportunity of repeating them.

"Let the little children come to me," said Jesus, "and do not forbid them, for the Kingdom of Heaven is given only to such as have a childlike spirit and nature like theirs." Instead of being too young for the bestowal of His blessing, He saw in their simplicity and inno-

cence the fond earnest of the character He sought to reproduce in mankind. The citizens of His Kingdom must become like them by change of heart and a lowly spiritual life. Stooping down, therefore, He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them. Even the least incidents were thus ever turned to the highest uses.

The need of this childlike spirit, and the sad results of its absence, must have been brought home to the Apostles by an occurrence in their next day's journey. Starting southwards, on the way to Jerusalem, a young man, whose exemplary character had already made him a ruler of the local synagogue, came running after Him, and, approaching Him with great respect, kneeled before Him, as was usual before a venerated Rabbi. "Teacher," said he, "I shall greatly thank Thee if Thou wilt ease my mind. I have laboured diligently to do good works of all kinds prescribed by the Law, but I do not feel satisfied that I have done enough; so am not sure, after all, that I shall inherit eternal life in the kingdom of the Messiah. Pray, tell me what special good work can I do to secure this?"

"Why do you ask me what is right to do?" answered Jesus. "Your question is superfluous, for it answers itself. There is only one Absolute Good—that is, God. The good act respecting which you inquire can be nothing else than perfect obedience to His holy will. If you really would enter into life eternal, you must keep the Commandments given thee by Him."

The young man expected to hear some new and special commands, requiring unwonted pains, and securing correspondingly great merit by faultless obedience. The answer of Jesus was too general to help him in this. He, therefore, asked—What commands He particularly meant.

To his astonishment and mortification, instead of naming some ceremonial injunctions, as the Rabbis would have done, Jesus simply quoted some of the well-known commandments of the Second Table —"Thou shalt not kill," "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not bear false witness," "Honour thy father and thy mother," closing the list with the greatest of all— "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," which was thus put last as the one by which He intended to bring the young man to the test.

These were only the common duties required of all men, and, as such, had a conventional fulfilment which satisfied human standards. Their scope was very different, however, in the eyes of Jesus, and this the young man presently felt.

His upright and honest life brought no blush at the enumeration. Without pride, except the secret pride of self-righteousness, and with all reverent docility, he replied:

"I believe I can say that I have strictly kept all these commands. In what respect do I still come short?"

The question itself revealed his spiritual deficiencies. It showed

that, however sincere in his efforts after such a life as would secure heaven, he had not risen above the outward service of the letter, and had realized neither the spirit of the commandments as a whole, nor, in particular, the infinite breadth of that which enjoined love to his neighbour. Had he seen this in its true grandeur, it would have hinted a higher moral task than merely legal conceptions of duty had taught him, and have supplied, at the same time, an impulse towards its fulfilment.

Jesus read his heart in a moment, and was won by the guilelessness of his answer and question, and by the evident worth of his character. As He looked at him, so earnest, so humble, so admirable in his life and spirit, He loved him. Could he only stand the testing demand that must now be made, he would pass into the citizenship of the kingdom of God.

"You lack one thing yet," said Jesus, therefore, "if you really wish to be perfect. Had you understood the commands of God in their depth and breadth, you would not have asked if you could do anything more than you had done; their living power in you would have suggested continually fresh duties. When you ask me to tell you what next to do, it shows that you think only of tasks imposed from without, and do not act from a principle in your own soul. If your desire for eternal life be supreme, as it ought to be—go home, sell all that you have, and give what you get for it to the poor, and instead of the earthly riches thus given in charity, you will have treasure in heaven. Then, come to me, be my disciple, and bear your cross after me, as I bear mine."

The demand, great though it seems, was exactly suited to the particular case. It was a special test in a special instance, though underneath it lay the unconditional self-sacrifice, and self-surrender for Christ, required from all His disciples. It could not fail to bring the young man to a clearer self-knowledge, and thus, to a wholly new conception of what true religion demanded. The only way to lead him to a healthier moral state was to humble him, by a disclosure of weakness hitherto unsuspected. He had fancied himself willing to do whatever could be required: he could now see if he really were so. He had thought he cared for nothing in comparison with gaining heaven: he could now judge for himself if he had not erred.

It might have been hoped that this lofty counsel, the repetition of that which had been so often given to others before, would have roused one so earnest to a noble enthusiasm, before which all lower thoughts would have lost their power. The love he had inspired in Jesus must have shown itself towards him in every look and tone: there must have been every desire to attract and win: none to repel. But the one absolute, constant condition of acceptance demanded from all—supreme, unrestricted devotion to Himself and His cause, and willingness to sacrifice all human ties and possessions, or even life, for His sake, could in no case be lowered. Poor, friendless, out-

lawed, Jesus abated no jot of His awful claims, loftier than human monarch had ever dreamed of making, on all who sought citizenship in His Kingdom.

The test exacted was fatal, at least for the time. It was precisely that which the young man had least expected, and was a thousand times harder than any legal enforcements; painful and protracted even as those by which the highest grade of ceremonial holiness was attained. Had Jesus invited him to be His disciple without requiring the condition He had so often declared indispensable, there would have been instant, delighted acceptance. But that could not be. He could not say "Be my disciple," till He had secured his supreme devotion.

Rich, and already a magistrate—for Church and State with the Jews were identical—the demand staggered and overwhelmed the young man. A moment's thought, and his broad acres, and social position, which he must give up for ever, if he would follow Jesus, raised a whole army of hindrances and hesitations. The condition imposed had no limitation, but neither had his own question to which it was a reply. He had been touched where weakest, but this was exactly what his repeated request demanded. Why should Jesus have asked less from him than from other disciples? It was, doubtless, harder for a rich than for a poor man to leave all, but there must, in no case, be room for doubt of the entire sincerity of those admitted as disciples, and this could be tested only by their readiness to sacrifice all to become so. It was less, besides, to demand this, as things were, for discipleship would only too surely involve, very soon, not only loss of all earthly goods, but life-long trials, and even death.

But the world got the better in the young man's heart, and he went away sorrowful, at the thought that he was voluntarily excluding himself from the kingdom of the Messiah. Yet, the broad acres: the rich possessions—how could he give them up?

"How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" said Jesus, as he went away, evidently in great mental distress. "It is easier," continued He, "to use a proverb you often hear, for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

The words fell with a new and perplexing sound on the ears of the disciples. Like all Jews, they had been accustomed to regard worldly prosperity as a special mark of the favour of God—for their ancient Scriptures seemed always to connect the enjoyment of temporal blessings with obedience to the divine law. They still, moreover, secretly cherished the hope of an earthly kingdom of the Messiah, in which riches would play a great part, and, even apart from all this, if it were hard to enter the kingdom of heaven, except by stooping to absolute poverty, it seemed as if very few could be saved at all.

"Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God," repeated Jesus, seeing their wonder and

evident uneasiness. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, who clings to his riches, to enter into the kingdom of God."

"Who, then, can be saved?" asked some of them.

"With men it is impossible," replied Jesus, fixing His eyes earnestly on them, "but not with God: for with God all things are possible. He can bestow heavenly grace to wean the heart from worldly riches: apart from this, the world will prevail."

Peter, especially, had listened with deep attention to all that had passed, and had been mentally applying it to the case of his fellow disciples and himself. Their minds were still full of the Jewish idea of merit before God, and of a claim to corresponding reward. When Jesus summoned them to follow Him, they had been exactly in the young man's position, though they had not had so much to surrender. They had given up every thing for Him, at His first invitation—their families, houses, occupations, and prospects. However little in themselves, these had been the whole world to them. It seemed only natural, therefore, that they should have a proportion of that treasure which Jesus had promised the young man, if he forsook all for His sake.

In keeping with his natural frank impulsiveness, Peter could not restrain his thoughts, and asked Jesus directly what he and his fellow Apostles would have for their loyalty to Him?

Knowing the honest simplicity of the Twelve, their Master, instead of reproving their boldness, cheered them with words which must have sounded inconceivably grand to Galilæan fishermen.

"Be assured that at the final triumph of my Kingdom, when all things shall be delivered from their present corruption, and restored, through me and my work, to the glory they had before sin entered the world: when I, the now despised Son of Man, shall come again, seated on the throne of my glory, you who have followed me in my humiliation, will be exalted to kingly dignity, and shall sit, each of you, on his throne, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Yea, more: every one who gives up his brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, or houses, that he may the more unreservedly spread my Gospel, and honour my name, will be rewarded a hundred fold. Even in this present life he will receive back again richly all he has left: houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children; for he will find among those who believe in me, a compensation for all: he will regard and be allowed freely to use their means as his own, and be welcomed by them with more than brotherly friendship. But, with all this, he will have to bear persecution. In the future world, moreover, he will have a still greater reward, for there he will inherit everlasting life."

"But," added He, by way of warning, "Do not trust to your having been the first to follow me. For the rewards of the kingdom of heaven will be like those given by a householder who had a

vineyard, and, needing labourers for it, went out early in the morning to hire them. Having found some, he agreed to give them a denarius a day, and sent them into the vineyard. Going out again about the third hour—nine o'clock—he saw others standing idle in the market-place, and sent them also into the vineyard, making no bargain with them, however, but bidding them trust him that he would give them what was just. He did the same at the sixth and at the ninth hours. Finally, he went out at the eleventh hour, and found still others standing about, and asked why they had stayed there all the day, idle. 'Because no one has hired us,' replied they. 'Go ye also into the vineyard,' said he, 'and you shall receive whatever is right.'

"When the evening was come, the lord of the vineyard bade his overseer call the labourers, and pay them all the same sum—the denarius for which he had agreed with the first. He was, also, to begin with those who came into the vineyard last.

"When they came, therefore, who were hired at the eleventh hour, they received each a denarius. But when the first came, they supposed they should have received more; but they also received each only the same amount. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying—'Those who came in last did only one hour's work, and thou hast made them equal to us, who bore the scorching wind from the desert at sunrise, and the heat of the day.' But he answered one of them, 'Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a denarius? Take what is yours, and go: I desire to give the same to those who came in last, as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will in my own affairs? Is thine eye evil because I am good?'

"The householder thus made the first last, and the last first, because the first had been working for hire, while the others had simply trusted his promise. He who works in my kingdom for the sake of a reward hereafter, may do his work well, but he honours me less than others who trust in me, without thinking of future gain. The spirit in which you labour for me gives your service its value. He who is called late in life, and serves me unselfishly, will stand higher at the great day than he who has served me longer, but with a less noble motive. Many are called to join my kingdom and work in it, but few show themselves by their spirit and zeal especially worthy of honour. If the first find themselves last, it will depend on themselves, for though no one can claim reward as his due in the kingdom of God, yet I give it, of favour, to those first who serve me most purely. He, I repeat, who works most devotedly, without thought of reward, will be first, though, perhaps, last to be called: he will be chosen to honour, while others less zealous and loving, though earlier called, will remain undistinguished."

Nothing could have been more fitted to check any tendency to self-importance and pride, so natural in men raised to a position so incon-

ceivably above their original station. Nor was there room, henceforth, for any mercenary thoughts, even of future reward, for the discharge of their duty. They could not forget, that, though first to enter the vineyard of the New Kingdom, they were yet, so far, on a footing with all who should follow them, that the spiritual worth of their work, alone determined their ultimate honour. The special reward promised by their Master was a free gift of God, not the payment of a debt, and depended on their own spirit and zeal.

They were now approaching the end of their journey, for they were near Jericho, at which the road struck directly west to Jerusalem. Nisan, the month of the Passover, had already come, and only a few days more remained of our Saviour's life. Nature was putting on its spring beauty, and throngs of early pilgrims were passing to the holy city. All around was joy and gladness, but, amidst all, a deep gloom hung over the little company of Jesus. Everything on the way—the constant disputes with the Rabbis—the warning about Antipas; the very solemnity of the recent teachings, combined to fill their minds with an undefined terror. They had shrunk from visiting Bethany, because it was near Jerusalem; for they knew that the authorities were on the watch to arrest their Master, and put Him to death. He had had to flee from that village, first to Ephraim, and then, over the Jordan, to Perea, and yet He was, now, deliberately walking into the very jaws of danger. They had marched steadily southwards through the woody highlands of Gilead; had passed the rushing waters of the Jabbok and its tributaries, and had, for a moment, seen, once more, the spot where John had closed his mission. The distant mountains of Machaerus now threw their shadows over their route, and, everywhere, the recollections of the great herald of their Master met them. Mount Nebo, where Moses was buried, and the range of Attaroth, where John's mutilated corpse had been lain to rest, were within sight. Everything in the associations of the journey was solemn, and they knew their national history too well not to fear that, for Jesus, to enter Jerusalem, would be to share the sad fate of the prophets of old, whom it had received only to murder. It was clear that there could be but one issue, and no less so that He was voluntarily going to His death. The calm resolution with which He thus carried out His purpose awed them; for, so far from showing hesitation, He walked at their head, while they could only follow with excited alarm.

Yet, their ideas were still confused, and the hope that things might result very differently, still alternated with their fears. The old dream of an earthly kingdom still clung to them, and they fancied that, though Jesus might expect to be killed in the rising of the nation which He would, perhaps, bring about at the approaching feast, He might be more fortunate, and live to establish a great Messianic monarchy.

To dissipate such an illusion, He had already told them, twice, ex-

actly what was before Him; but to prepare them, if possible, for the shock which the sad realization of His words was so soon to bring, He once more recapitulated, with greater minuteness than ever, what He knew, with divine certainty, awaited His entrance into Jerusalem.

"Behold," said He, "we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn Him to death"—they, and no others; for, as heads of the Old Kingdom of God, now corrupt and dying, they had rejected Him—"and they will deliver Him to the Romans, to mock, and scourge, and crucify, but the third day He shall rise again."

How hard it is to uproot strong prepossessions was shown within a few hours. In spite of such repeated warnings, not only the Twelve, but the others who followed Him, did not understand what He meant. It is easy for us to do so, after the event; but to anticipate the explanation thus given must have been well-nigh impossible to minds preoccupied with ideas so radically opposed to it.

The mention of thrones, as in reversion for the Twelve at "the Coming" of their Master in His glory, had neutralized the announcement of His death. His open triumph was expected as very near at hand; His death they did not understand, and could not reconcile with His other statements, for, indeed, they did not wish to do so.

Dreams of ambition, thus kindled, had risen, especially in the minds of James and John, who, with Peter, were the most honoured of the Apostles. They had been in a better social position than most of their brethren, and, with Salome, their mother, had given all they had, freely, to the cause of their Master. Ashamed, themselves, to tell Him their thoughts, they availed themselves of Salome, whom, perhaps, He might the more readily hear, as older than they; as a woman; perhaps as His mother's sister; and as one who had shown herself, like her sons, His true friend.

She now came, therefore, with them, in secret, and, falling on her knees, as was the custom where reverence was intended, and as was especially due to one whom she regarded as the future great Messianic King—told Him she came to ask a surpassing favour. "What is it?" asked Jesus. "Say," answered she, "that these, my two sons, may sit, like the chief ministers of other kings, on the first step of Thy throne, at Thy feet, on Thy right hand and Thy left, when Thou settest up the Kingdom."

So different, as yet, were the two men from what they were afterwards to become, when they had drunk more deeply of their Master's spirit!

"You do not understand what your request implies," answered Jesus. "The highest place in my Kingdom can only be gained by drinking the cup of sore trial, of which I, myself, shall drink presently, and enduring the same fierce baptism of sorrow and suffering, even to death, in which I am to be plunged. Do you think you are able to bear all that?"

In simple true-heartedness, both answered, at once, that they were.

"You shall, indeed," replied Jesus, "drink of my cup, and be baptized with the same baptism as I, but, in my Kingdom, no honours can be given from mere favour, as in kingdoms of the world. Those only can obtain them whose spiritual greatness has fitted them for them. The way to secure them is only through supreme self-sacrifice for my sake, and they are given by my Father to those only who are thus prepared for them. For such, indeed, they are prepared by Him already."

John and James had striven to hide their selfish and ambitious request, by coming to Jesus when He was alone, but the Ten, as was inevitable, soon heard of it, and were indignant in the extreme at such an unworthy attempt to forestal them in their Master's favour. Their own ambition, at best only suppressed, broke out, afresh, in a fierce storm of jealous passion. Such human weakness was sadly out of place at any time, among the followers of the meek and lowly Son of Man, but still more so, now, when He stood almost under the shadow of the cross, and it must have caused Him the keenest sorrow. Calling the whole Twelve, offenders and offended, round Him, therefore, He pointed out how utterly they had misapprehended the nature of His Kingdom, notwithstanding all His teaching through the past years.

"You are disputing about precedence in my Kingdom," said He, "as if it were like the kingdoms of the world. Once more, let me tell you that it is wholly different. The kings of the heathen nations around us lord it over their subjects, and their magnates, under them, exercise authority often more imperiously than their chiefs. But it is very different in my Kingdom, and a very different spirit must find place among you, its dignitaries. He who wishes to be great in that Kingdom can only be so by becoming the servant of the others; and he who wishes the very highest rank, can only be so by becoming their slave. You may see that it must be so from my own case, your King and Head—for I, the Son of Man, came not to be ministered unto, as other kings are, but to serve, and to give up even my life as a ransom for many."

The upland pastures of Perea were now behind them, and the road led down to the sunken channel of the Jordan, and the "divine district" of Jericho. This small but rich plain was the most luxuriant spot in Palestine. Sloping gently upwards from the level of the Dead Sea, 1,350 feet under the Mediterranean, to the stern background of the hills of Quarantana, it had the climate of Lower Egypt, and displayed the vegetation of the tropics. Its fig-trees were pre-eminently famous: it was unique in its groves of palms of various kinds: its crops of dates were a proverb: the balsam-plant, which grew principally here, furnished a costly perfume, and was in great repute for healing wounds: maize yielded a double harvest: wheat ripened a whole month earlier than in Galilee, and

innumerable bees found a Paradise in the many aromatic flowers and plants, not a few unknown elsewhere, which filled the air with odours, and the landscape with beauty.

Rising like an amphitheatre from amidst this luxuriant scene, lay Jericho, the chief place east of Jerusalem—at seven or eight miles distance from the Jordan—on swelling slopes, seven hundred feet above the bed of the river, from which its gardens and groves, thickly interspersed with mansions, and covering seventy furlongs from north to south, and twenty from east to west, were divided by a strip of wilderness. The town had had an eventful history. Once the stronghold of the Canaanites, it was still, in the days of Christ, surrounded by towers and castles. Thrax and Taurus, two of them, at the entrance of the city, lay in ruins since the time of Pompey, but the old citadel Dock still stood—dark with the recollection that its heroic builder Simon Maccabæus, and his two sons, had been murdered in its chambers. Kypros, the last fortress built by Herod the Great, who had called it after his mother, rose white in the sun on the south of the town. The palace of the Asmonean kings towered amidst gardens; but it had been deserted by royalty since the evil genius of her house, Alexandra, the mother-in-law of Herod, and mother of Mariamne, had lived in it. The great palace of Herod, in the far-famed groves of palms, had been plundered and burned down in the tumults that followed his death, but in its place a still grander structure, built by Archelaus, had risen amidst still finer gardens, and more copious and delightful streams. A grand theatre and spacious circus, built by Herod, scandalized the Jews, not less by their unholy amusements than by the remembrance that the elders of the nation had been shut up in the latter by the dying tyrant, to be cut down at his death in revenge for the hatred borne him. Nor was the murder of the young Asmonean, Aristobulus, in the great pools which surrounded the old Asmonean palace, forgotten; nor the time when Cleopatra had wrung the rich oasis from the hands of Herod, by her spell over her lover, Antony. A great stone aqueduct of eleven arches brought a copious supply of water to the city, and the Roman military road ran through it. The houses themselves, however, though showy, were not substantial, but were built mostly of sun-dried brick, like those of Egypt; so that now, as in the similar cases of Babylon, Nineveh, or Egypt, after long desolation hardly a trace of them remains.

A great multitude accompanied Jesus as He drew near Jericho—pilgrims, on foot, or on asses, or camels; who had come from all the side passes, and cross roads, of Perea and Galilee. They met at this central point to go up to the Passover, at Jerusalem: not a few with an eye to the trade driven so briskly in the Holy City at this season, with foreign pilgrims,—as well as for devotion.

Near the gate of the town one of the last miracles of our Lord was performed. All the roads leading to Jerusalem, like the Temple

itself, were much frequented at the times of the feasts, by beggars, who reaped a special harvest from the charity of the pilgrims.

Blindness is specially frequent in the East. While in Northern Europe there is only one blind in a thousand, in Egypt there is one in every hundred; indeed, very few persons there have their eyes quite healthy. The great changes of temperature at different times of the day, especially between day and night, cause inflammation of the eyes, as well as of other parts, both in Palestine and on the Lower Nile; while neglect and stupid prejudice, refusing or slighting remedies in the earlier stages, lead to blindness in many cases that otherwise might have been easily cured.

Among the beggars who had gathered on the sides of the road at Jericho were two who had thus lost their sight: one of whom only, by name Bar-Timæus, for some special reason, is particularly noticed by two of the Gospels, in the incident that followed.

They had probably heard of the cure, at Jerusalem, of the man who had been born blind, and learning now from the crowd that the great wonder-worker was passing by, at once appealed to Him as the Son of David—the Messiah—to have mercy on them. The multitude tried in vain to silence them: they only cried the louder. At last, Jesus came near, and, standing still, commanded them to be brought. In a moment their upper garment, which would have hindered them, was cast aside, and, leaping up, they stood before Him with their artless tale; that they believed He could open their eyes, and they prayed He would do so. A touch sufficed: immediately their eyes received sight again, and they joined in the throng that followed their Healer.

Jericho was a Levitical city, and hence the residence of a great many priests: its position as the centre of an exceptionally productive district, and also of the import and export trade between the two sides of the Jordan, made it, also, a city of publicans. It had much the same place in Southern Palestine as Capernaum—the centre of the trade between the sea-coast and the northern interior, as far as Damascus—held in Galilee. The transit to and fro of so much wealth brought with it proportionate work and harvest for the farmers of the revenue. Hence, a strong force of customs and excise collectors was stationed in it, under a local head, named Zacchæus, whom, in our day, we might have called a commissioner of customs. In a system so oppressive and arbitrary as the Roman taxation, the inhabitants must have suffered heavily at the hands of such a complete organization. To be friendly with any of their number was not the way to secure the favour of the people at large.

Zacchæus, especially, was disliked and despised, for, though a Jew, he had grown rich by an infamous profession, and was, in the eyes of his fellow-townsmen, not only an extortioner, but, by his serving the Romans, a traitor to his race, and to their invisible king, Jehovah. His personal character, moreover, seems to have been bad, for he

owned to Jesus that he had, at least in some cases, wrung money from his fellow-townsmen by swearing falsely against them before the magistrates.

Jesus had seldom passed that way, and hence His person was little known, though report had spread His name widely. Among others, Zacchæus was anxious to see Him, and, being a little man, he had run before the caravan with which Jesus was entering the town, and had taken his station in one of the ever-green fig-trees—a sycamore—of which some grew at the wayside, of great size—a few even fifty feet in circumference. They were easy to climb, from their short trunks and wide branches, forking out in all directions.

He had never seen Jesus; but he was not the less known to Him, and must have been astounded when the Great Teacher, as He passed the spot, looked up, and, addressing him by name, told him to make haste and come down, as He intended to be his guest that night. A divine purpose of mercy, as yet known to Jesus alone, had determined this self-invitation. Though all others shunned the chief of the publicans as specially disreputable, he was chosen in loving pity by Jesus, as His host. The word was enough: in an instant he was on the ground, and pressingly welcomed Christ to his hospitality. That he, the hated and despised one, should have been thus favoured, in a moment won his heart, and waked the impulse of a new and better life; but it also raised the hostile feeling of the multitude. Voices on every side were heard murmuring that "He was gone, in defiance of the Law, and of public feeling and patriotic duty, to lodge with the chief publican."

They little knew the mighty change His having done so had, in a moment, wrought in a soul hitherto degraded and lost, not less by an ignoble life, than by the social proscription which barred all hope of self-recovery. Christ had completely overcome him, for He had treated him as a man, with respect, and shown him that the way still lay open, even to him, to a new and better future. The two had meanwhile, apparently, reached the court of Zacchæus' house, and the crowd pressed closely round as Jesus was about to enter a dwelling, the threshold of which no respectable Jew would think of crossing. He was braving a harsh public opinion, and incurring the bitterest hatred of the Jewish religious leaders, by openly disregarding the laws of ceremonial defilement, and by treating with respect one whom they denounced as accursed. Zacchæus was overpowered with a sense of the unselfish magnanimity which could prompt such treatment of one who had no claim to it. He would signalize the event by an open and public vow. Standing before the crowd, therefore, he addressed Christ—"Lord, I feel deeply the honour and loving service you do me, and I hereby vow that I shall give one-half of my goods to the poor, to show how much I thank Thee. And, still more, if, as I lament to think has been the case, I have ever taken any money from any one by false accusation, I promise to repay

him four-fold—the highest restitution that even Roman law demands from one guilty of such an offence."

"This day is salvation come to this house," said Jesus, as He heard such words, "for this man—sinner though he be—is, nevertheless, a son of Abraham, and now shows himself humbled and penitent. I came to seek and to save that which was lost, and I rejoice to have won back to the fold of God, a child of Israel, who had wandered so far from Him." He had foreseen the whole incident, by His divine power, and calmly ignored all recognition of caste or class when a human soul was to be won.

"Before you leave," He continued, still addressing the crowd in the court-yard, or outside it, "let me tell you a parable. I know what is in your thoughts. You see that I am near Jerusalem, and suppose I shall take advantage of the Passover, when such vast throngs of Jews are in the holy city, to proclaim the kingdom of the Messiah in the way you expect, by insurrection and force. Let me set before you the truth."

With that marvellous power of turning every incident to practical account which marked His teaching, He proceeded to repeat a parable borrowed, in many particulars, from facts in their recent or passing national history. Archelaus had set out for Rome, most likely from Jericho itself, not many years before, to obtain investiture in the kingdom left to him by the will of his father Herod, and the Jews had sent a fruitless embassy after him, to prevent his obtaining it. All the princes of the house of Herod had, indeed, been only vassals of Rome, and had had to go to the imperial city, in each case, to seek their kingdom as a gift from the Roman senate.

"A certain man," said He, "of noble birth, went to a distant country to receive for himself the dignity of king over his former fellow-citizens, and then to return. Before doing so, he called ten of his servants, from whom, as such, he had the right to expect the utmost care for his interests in his absence. He proposed, in his secret mind, to entrust them with a small responsibility, by their discharge of which he could judge, when he returned, of their fitness and worthiness to be put into positions of greater consideration; for he wished to choose from them his future chief officers.

"In the meantime he gave them, each, only a mina, one hundred drachmæ, and said to them, 'Trade with this, on my account, till I return.' If they proved to be faithful in this small matter, he would be able to advance them to higher trusts.

"It happened, however, that he was so unpopular, that his fellow-citizens, in their hatred of him, sent an embassy after him to the supreme power, complaining against him, and contemptuously declaring that they would not have such a man to rule over them. But their embassy failed, for, in spite of it, he obtained the province, and was appointed their king.

"On his return, after he had thus received the government, he

ordered the servants to whom he had given the money to be called before him, that he might know what each had gained by trading. The first came and said, 'Lord, thy mina has gained ten.' 'Well done, good servant,' replied his master, 'because thou wast faithful in a very little, be thou governor of ten cities.' The second came, saying, 'Lord, thy mina has gained five.' 'Be thou governor of five cities,' replied his master. But another came and said, 'Lord, here is thy mina, I have kept it safely tied up in a napkin: you will find it just as I got it. I did not know what to do with it, and I was afraid of thee; for I know you are a hard man in money matters, looking for great profits where you have laid out next to nothing,—taking up, as they say, what you had not put down, and, if needs be, reaping where you had not sown,—making good your loss, if there were any, at his expense who caused it,—and so, to keep myself safe, I thought it best to run no risk one way or other.'

"'I will judge you out of your own mouth, wicked servant,' replied his master; 'You say you knew I was a hard man in money matters, seeking gain where I had laid nothing out to secure it, and reaping where others have sown,—why then did you not at least give my money to some exchanger to use at his table, that thus, on my return, I might have got it back with interest?' Then, turning to the servant standing by, he continued, 'Take from him the mina, and give it him that has ten.' 'He has ten already,' muttered the servants, half afraid. But the king went on in his anger, without heeding them,—'I tell you that to every one who shows his fitness to serve me, by having already increased what I at first gave him, I shall give more; but I shall take away what I first gave, from him, who, by adding nothing to it, has proved his unfitness to use what might be put in his hands.'

"'As to my enemies, who did not wish me to reign over them, bring them hither, and put them to death in my presence.'"

The lessons of the parable could hardly be misunderstood. To the Jewish people, who would not receive Him as the Messiah, they spoke in words of warning alarm; but the Twelve, themselves, heard a solemn caution. They had each, in being selected as an apostle, received a sacred trust, to be used for his Master's interests, till the coming again in glory. Well for him, who, when his Lord returned to judgment, could give a good account of his stewardship; woe to him who had neglected his trust! Though called to the same honour at first as the others, as an apostle, he would be stripped of his rank, and receive no share in the glory and dignities of the Messianic kingdom. As to the Jews who rejected Him, His coming would be the signal for the sorest judgments.

Having finished His brief stay in Jericho, Jesus set out, once more, on His journey of calm, self-sacrificing love, to Jerusalem, going on before the multitude in His grand consciousness of victory beyond thought. Many had already gone up to the Holy City, for not a few

needed to be there some time before the feast, to prepare themselves to take part in it, by purifications necessary from various causes. Lepers, for example, who were cured, but had not been pronounced clean by the priests, and many others, were in this position. Great numbers, moreover, doubtless went up early, for purposes of trade with the first arrivals of pilgrims from abroad.

Meanwhile, all classes alike, in Jerusalem, discussed the probability of Christ's coming to the feast. The excitement among the people was evident, and increased the alarm of the hierarchical party, for how could they withstand Him, if He once gained general popular support? The advice of Caiaphas had, therefore, been accepted as the policy of the party at large, and orders had been issued that He should be arrested at once, when found. It was even required that any one who knew where He was, should report it, with a view to His apprehension.

In the midst of this commotion, Jesus quietly entered Bethany, on the sixth day before the Passover. It was, however, impossible for Him to remain concealed. The news passed from mouth to mouth, and the street of the village soon became thronged with visitors, who came, not only to see Him, but to see Lazarus also, whom they heard He had raised from the dead. The high priests began to question whether they could not manage to put him, also, to death. The sight of him was winning many disciples to Jesus. They would try.

CHAPTER LV.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE long caravan of pilgrims that had accompanied Jesus up the wild gorge of the Kedron, from Jericho, had been left at Bethany; some pressing on to Jerusalem, others striking their tents, as fancy pleased them, in the pleasant dell below the village, or on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where they could feast their eyes with a sight of Jerusalem. It was the eve of the Sabbath, and that night and the next day were sacred. The journey from Jericho had been exhausting. A steep and narrow bridle-path, threading the precipitous defile, had been the only road. It was the scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The khan, where the wounded man was sheltered, had been passed half way. Lonely ascents, between bare rocks, with the worst footing, had only been left behind when Bethany and Bethphage, on the eastern spur of the Mount of Olives, came in sight. The journey was over before three in the afternoon, for it was the rule to have three hours of rest before the Sabbath began, at six. In Bethany Jesus was at home. It was the village of Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary. The fifteen miles from Jericho had been a continual climb of over three thousand feet, but He could now rest with His friends,

through the Sabbath. Before the next He would be crucified. And He knew it.

This glimpse of sweet rest over—the last He would enjoy before the awful end; the first act in the great tragedy—His triumphal entry into Jerusalem—fitly led the way to the great consummation.

In these last months He had more and more openly assumed the supreme dignity of Messiah. With wise caution He had at first refrained from a sudden proclamation of His office, and had carefully shunned popular excitement even by the publication of His miracles; that His words—which were the true seed of His kingdom—might get time to root themselves, and bear fruit among the people, before the inevitable opposition of the ecclesiastical authorities brought His work to a close. He had never, however, refused the title when given Him, or the honours, from time to time paid Him as the Christ. He had even revealed Himself to the woman of Samaria, to the Apostles, first, on the Sea of Galilee, and afterwards, with impressive solemnity, at Cæsarea Philippi; and, latterly, more than once, to His enemies, as the Head of the New Kingdom of God. But, as yet, He had made no public, or, as it were, official declaration of His claims and rights as the Messiah, and till this was done, there still wanted a formal proclamation of His kingdom before Israel and the world. Till it had been done, moreover, the heads of the moribund theocracy could not be said to have had the choice openly given them, as the representatives of the religious past, to accept Him as the Messiah, or definitely to reject Him.

He had, therefore, determined, with calm deliberation, and consciousness of what it involved, to enter Jerusalem publicly, with such circumstance as would openly announce His claim to be the Messiah. He would also perform specific Messianic acts, in the very citadel of the theocracy, and under the eyes of the haughty, and yet alarmed, hierarchy. He would enter as a king, but, as the Prince of Peace, giving no real pretence for any charge of political design, but clearly, as king only in a spiritual sense. He had no longer any reason to conceal from the authorities whom He really was, and felt Himself to be.

The companies of pilgrims from the various towns and districts of Palestine, or from Jewish settlements abroad, were wont to make public entries into the city before the great feasts. Such an entry Jesus would make; Himself its central figure. It would be a day of joy and gladness to Himself and to others, as when a king enters on his kingdom. He would no longer check the popular feeling in His favour. His last entry to the Holy City, at the Feast of Tabernacles, had been designedly secret; but this should be in exact contrast, for He knew that His kingly work was now over, so far as He, Himself, could complete it, and the enthusiasm of willing consecration to death, as His path to eternal triumph, filled Him with a serene and victorious joy. Misconception of His claim would be impossible in honest

minds, in the face of facts. Israel should now see Him come openly, as He, who, alone, if they frankly accepted Him, could save them, by leading them as a nation, to true repentance, and a higher spiritual life. He knew, beforehand, that they would not, but His work could not be said to be completely ended till He had given them and their leaders this last public opportunity.

Hitherto He had entered the Holy City on foot; this day He would do so as David and the Judges of Israel were wont—riding on the specially Jewish ass. Nor must we think of Western associations in connection with the name. In the East, the ass is in high esteem. Statelier, livelier, swifter than with us, it vies with the horse in favour. Among the Jews it was equally valued as a beast of burden; for work in the field or at the mill; and for riding. In contrast to the horse, which had been introduced by Solomon, from Egypt, and was used especially for war, it was the symbol of peace. To the Jew it was peculiarly national, for had not Moses led his wife, seated on an ass, to Egypt; had not the Judges ridden on white asses; and was not the ass of Abraham, the friend of God, noted in Scripture? Every Jew, moreover, expected, from the words of one of the prophets, that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem, poor, and riding on an ass. No act could be more perfectly in keeping with the conception of a king of Israel, and no words could express more plainly that that king proclaimed Himself the Messiah.

On the early morning of Sunday, the tenth of Nisan—the Jewish Monday, therefore—Jesus and the Twelve left their hospitable shelter at Bethany, and passed out to the little valley beneath, with its clusters of fig, almond, and olive trees, soon to burst into leaf; and its ever-green palms. Somewhere near lay the larger village of Bethphage; like Bethany, so close to Jerusalem as to be reckoned, in the Rabbinical law, a part of it. Secret disciples, such as the five hundred who afterwards gathered to one spot in Galilee, and the hundred and twenty who met, after the resurrection, in the upper room in the Holy City, were scattered in many places. At least one such lived in Bethphage. Jesus, therefore, now sent two disciples thither; telling them that, immediately on entering it, they would find a she ass tied, and her colt standing by her. "Loose and bring them to me," said He, "and if any one make a remark, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them at once." His supernatural power had rightly directed them. The ass and its colt were found, and the ready permission of their owner—no doubt a disciple—was obtained at once, for their being taken for His use.

Meanwhile, it had reached Jerusalem that He was about to enter it, and great numbers of the Galilæan pilgrims, proud of Him as a prophet from their own district, forthwith set out to meet and escort Him, cutting fronds, as they came, from the palm-trees that then lined the path, to do Him honour. The disciples showed equal enthusiasm, and it was forthwith caught by the crowds around—for

the whole open ground near the city was filled with pilgrims at this season. The former hastily threw their abbas on the back of the colt, to deck it for their Master, and set Him on it, the mother walking at its side; and the latter, not to be behind, spread theirs on the road, or cut off the young sprouts from the trees, and strewed them before Him. So, myrtle twigs and robes had been strewn by their ancestors before Mordecai, when he came forth from the palace of Ahasuerus, and so the Persian army had honoured Xerxes, when about to cross the Hellespont, and so it is still sometimes done in Palestine, as a mark of special honour.

There were three paths over the Mount of Olives—on the north, in the hollow between the two crests of the hill; next, over the summit; and on the south, between the Mount of Olives and the Hill of Offence—still the most frequented and the best. Along this Jesus advanced, preceded and followed by multitudes, with loud cries of rejoicing, as at the Feast of Tabernacles, when the great Hallel was daily sung in their processions. With the improvisatorial turn of the East, their acclamations took a rhythmical form, which was long sung in the early Church, as the first Christian hymn.

"Give (Thou) the triumph, (O Jehovah), to the Son of David!
Blessed be the kingdom of our Father David, now to be restored in the name of Jehovah!
Blessed be He that cometh—the King of Israel—in the name of Jehovah!
Our peace and salvation (now coming) are from God above!
Praised be He in the highest heavens (for sending them by Him, the Son of David)!
From the highest heavens, send Thou, now, salvation!"

It was a triumph in wondrous contrast with that of earthly monarchs. No spoils of towns or villages adorned it, no trains of captives destined to slavery or death; the spoil of His sword and His spear were seen only in trophies of healing and love, for the lame whom He had cured ran before, the dumb sang His praises, and the blind, sightless no longer, crowded to gaze on their benefactor. The Pharisees among the multitude in vain tried to silence the acclamations. In their mortification they even turned to Jesus Himself, to ask that He should rebuke those who made them. "No," replied He, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the very stones will cry out."

As they approached the shoulder of the hill, where the road bends downwards to the north, the sparse vegetation of the eastern slope changed, as in a moment, to the rich green of gardens and trees, and Jerusalem in its glory rose before them. It is hard for us to imagine, now, the splendour of the view. The City of God, seated on her hills, shone at the moment in the morning sun. Straight before, stretched the vast white walls and buildings of the Temple, its courts, glittering with gold, rising one above the other; the steep sides of the hill of David crowned with lofty walls; the mighty castles towering above them; the sumptuous palace of Herod in its

green parks, and the picturesque outlines of the streets. Over all rested the spell of a history of two thousand years; of a present which craved salvation in its own perverted way; and the mystic Holy of Holies linked the seen to the invisible. The crusaders, long centuries after, when the only glory left to the Holy City was its wondrous memories, burst out into a loud cry—Jerusalem! Jerusalem! when they first saw it, and the enthusiasm of the Jew could not have been fainter. The shouts and rejoicing rose higher than ever.

The whole scene was overpowering, even to Jesus Himself. He was crossing the ground on which, a generation later, the tenth Roman legion would be encamped, as part of the besieging force destined to lay all the splendour before Him in ashes. Knowing the future as He did, His heart was filled with indescribable sadness, for He was a patriot, and man, though also the Son of God. Looking at the spectacle before Him, and thinking of the contrast a few years would show, tears burst from His eyes, and His disciples heard Him saying—"Would that thou hadst known, thou, Jerusalem, in this, thy day, when I come, who, alone, can bring it—what would give thee peace and safety! But now, thou seest not what only could make them thine—the receiving me as the Messiah! Days will come upon thee, when thine enemies will raise a mount about thee, and compass thee round, and invest thee on every side, and level thee with the ground, and bury thy children under thy ruins, and leave not one stone in thee upon another, because thou knewest not the time when God, through me, offeredst thee salvation!"

Sweeping round to the north, the road approached Jerusalem by the bridge over the Kedron; to reach which it had to pass Gethsemane. The myriads of pilgrims on the slopes of Olivet, and the crowd at the eastern wall of the Temple, thus saw the procession winding in slow advance, till it reached the gate, now St. Stephen's, through which Jesus passed into Betheza—the new town—riding up the valley between it and Mount Moriah, through narrow streets, hung with flags and banners for the feast, and crowded, on the raised sides, and on every roof, and at every window, with eager faces. "Who is this?" passed from lip to lip. "It is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, in Galilee," shouted back the crowd of northern pilgrims and disciples, glorying in the vindication of the honour of their province before the proud and contemptuous sons of Jerusalem.

Leaving His beast and entering the Temple, which—having ridden—He could do without preparation, except that of removing His sandals, though the crowd with Him, if at such times the rules were enforced, had to stop behind to cleanse their dusty feet, take off their shoes, or sandals, and lay aside their walking staves, before entering a place so holy,—He took possession of it in the name and as the representative of Jehovah its Lord, and closed the wondrous day by a calm and prolonged survey of all around. Earnest, sad, indignant hours thus passed; but even they were filled with works of pitying

goodness, for the blind and the lame had heard of His coming, and hastened to Him, and were healed. The courts and halls of the Sacred House—the very stronghold of His enemies, re-echoed—to their intense mortification, with the shouts that had accompanied His entry to the city, for the miracles He wrought heightened and prolonged the enthusiasm till the very children joined in the cry of "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

"Do you see how powerless we are against Him?" muttered the Pharisees; "the whole people have gone after Him."

His bold appearance in the Temple itself, especially filled the priestly dignitaries and Rabbis with indignation, all the deeper because they dared not arrest Him for fear of the crowds, even when now in their very hand. That the children should hail Him as the Messiah, also enraged them. "Hearest thou not what these say?" asked some of them. But, instead of disavowing the supreme honour ascribed to Him, He only replied that He did—"but," added He, "have ye never read in your own Scriptures—'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, Thou (Jehovah) hast perfected praise, that Thou mightest put to shame Thine enemies, and silence Thy foes, and those who rage against Thee.'"

Never was His presence of mind and quick aptness of retort shown more strikingly.

The day was now far spent. The end proposed had been abundantly attained. The crowds had begun to retire, after evening prayers, and He, too, with the Twelve, passed out quietly with the throng, and betook Himself once more to the well-loved cottage at Bethany.

It had been no chance coincidence that the day in which He had thus virtually consecrated Himself to death, was that on which the paschal lamb was selected.

It is easy to understand the statement of the Gospels, that neither the Twelve nor the disciples at large realized at first the full significance of what had happened. In later times, however, after He had risen and ascended to heaven, its full grandeur gradually broke on them as they discoursed again and again on the whole strange history through which they had passed. They remembered, then, the words of the prophet Zechariah, and saw how the triumphal entry in which they had taken part, had been the divinely designed fulfilment of ancient prophecy.

The entry on Palm Sunday, though, for the moment, a bitter mortification to the hierarchical party, was presently hailed by them as a fancied mistake on the part of Jesus. Till now, all their efforts to frame any capital charge against Him, on plausible grounds, had utterly failed. He had slighted the Rabbinical laws, but the Romans, with whom lay the power of life and death, would take no cognizance of such offences. His public entry into Jerusalem, as the Messiah, amidst the shouts of the people, seemed to give them, at last, the

means of indicting Him for what they could represent as at least constructive treason—the claiming to be king instead of Cæsar. The Romans dreaded nothing more than assumption of the Messiahship, for it had often cost them dear to quell the insurrections to which it led, and they were stern to the uttermost against any attempt to challenge the Emperor's authority. But the absolutely peaceful bearing of Jesus, throughout: His studied care to make no illegal use of the popular enthusiasm: the quiet dispersion of the crowds, and the utter absence of any political character in His whole life and words, were fatal to judicial action, based on grounds so slender. They would not, however, let such a charge against Him slip, and could accuse Him to Pilate, if other charges failed, of "perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that He, Himself, is Christ, a king."

Morning saw Jesus once more on His way to the Temple. He had not as yet eaten, for He, apparently, looked forward to doing so at the home of some disciple in Jerusalem, and the keen air of the early hours made Him hungry. The little valley of Bethany was famous for dates and figs, for the very name Bethany means—"the place for dates:" while Bethphage is "the place for the green or winter fig"—a variety which remains on the trees through the winter, having ripened only after the leaves had fallen.

It was not yet the time of the fig harvest, but some of last year's fruit might, no doubt, be found on some of the trees growing about. One tree, especially, attracted the notice of Jesus. It grew at the road-side, as common property, and, even thus early, when other fig-trees had scarcely begun to show greenness, was conspicuous by its young leaves. When He came to it, however, they proved its only boast: there was no fruit of the year before, as might have been naturally expected. It was, indeed, the very type of a fair profession without performance: of the hypocrisy which has only leaves, and no fruit. Such a realized parable could not be passed in silence by One who drew a moral from every incident of life and nature. "Picture of boastful insincerity;" said He, loud enough for the disciples to hear—"type of Israel and its leaders: pretentious, but bearing no fruit to God—let no fruit grow on thee henceforward, for ever," and passed on. They were to learn that profession, without performance, found no favour with their Master.

Reaching the city, He once more went to the Temple, as His Father's house. Two years before, He had purified its outer court from the sordid abuses which love of gain had dexterously cloaked under an affectation of piously serving the requirements of worship. Since then, they had been restored in all their hatefulness. The lowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep, the cries of the money-changers, and the noisy market chaffering of buyers and sellers of doves or other accessories to a ceremonial worship, filled the air with discordant sounds of the outside world, which had no right in these

sacred precincts. The scene roused the same deep indignation in Jesus, as when He formerly rose in His grand protest against it. He had now, in His triumphal entry, formally proclaimed His Kingdom, and would, forthwith, vindicate its rights, by once more restoring the Temple to its becoming purity, for while it stood, it should be holy. The same fervent zeal again dismayed and paralyzed opposition. Filled, as all minds were, with the awe of the popular enthusiasm in His behalf, His command sufficed to clear the spacious court of its motley crowd: the sellers of doves, at His order, bore off their cages: the exchangers gathered up their coin, and He made the one remove their benches and counters, and overturned the empty booths of the others. Nor would He suffer the desecration of laden porters and others seeking to shorten their journeys by crossing the Temple spaces, as if they were public streets. They might carry them round by what way they chose, but must not make a thoroughfare of the sacred courts. "Jehovah has written," said He, "My house is the house of prayer for all nations, but ye, bringing in all the wiles and cheats of unworthy traffic, have made it a den of thieves."

We cannot suppose that Jesus, within a few hours of His death at the hands of the Temple authorities, and immediately after His lament over His rejection by them and the nation, intended, by this cleansing of the outer Temple spaces, to present Himself as a reformer of the Temple service. He meant, rather, to show, among other things, to the multitudes round Him, by an act which they could not mistake; that the Holy House was already desecrated by the sanctioned intrusion of the spirit of common gain, and made no more than a huge bazaar, with all its abuses; doubly unworthy in such a place. He wished to teach them by the sight of such insensibility to the ideal of a Temple of God, that the fall of the theocracy, with its scoffing high priests, and worn-out ceremonial, was a fact already begun. The very texts He had quoted were from lamentations over the religious decay of the nation, which, the prophets predicted, would bring the stranger into the House of Jehovah, as more worthy than the Jew; a decay which demanded, instead of mere outward service, a reform of the heart and life. But the great lesson, also, was not wanting, that the worship of God must be pure and earnest, not merely formal, and that hypocrisy was abhorrent to Him. This truth sank that day into all hearts, and before a generation had passed, it had been repeated from the Euphrates to Rome. It was the knell of the Jewish economy at its centre, for a Temple thus publicly marked as given over to greed and gain, under pretence of zeal for religion, was doomed to perish, as all hypocrisies must, in the end.

The significance of such an act to Himself, was known to none better than to Jesus. He knew that His hour had come, and that He would perish, a martyr to the spirit of a living, as opposed to the letter of a worn-out, faith. He knew that He had against Him the vast

power of great vested interests, who passed off their selfish aims as zeal for Church and State, and thus won support from unthinking thousands. He knew, moreover, that the religious revolution He had begun was spreading daily, and must be crushed by His opponents, by any measures that promised success, if their own authority were to stand. But, in the face of all this, He went forward with calm serenity towards death, as the one purchase price of liberty and life for the souls of men.

The day, which had begun with the symbolic cleansing of the Temple, was devoted, in its later hours, to His wonted work of teaching all who would listen, but none of the discourses have been preserved. The people, thronging the Court where He sat—for He taught in the Temple—were greatly impressed by His words; so new, so earnest, so searching and practical, compared with the vapidities of the Rabbis. It was vain for the Jewish authorities to attempt to arrest Him, while He was thus in favour, for all the people rallied to hear Him, and no one knew how far they might be disposed, with their fiery Eastern natures, to rise on His behalf, if He were seized.

This day, therefore, passed as safely for Him as the last, and in the evening Bethany once more received Him. He had entered the city with loud jubilees, but the last mortal struggle, begun by His lofty bearing and independence, made it wise to retire unnoticed. Leaving, therefore, privately, by the flight of steps to the Kedron, He crossed Olivet, only with His disciples.

The sensation caused by the great act of the day must have been profound. The religious instinct of the masses felt that it was worthy of a true prophet of God, but the Temple officials realized only the public censure it implied, on their own estimate and discharge of their duties. For the moment they were paralyzed and helpless; rebuked before all, and boldly condemned by the strange intruder, in exactly the point on which they were most sensitive, for it was as watchful guardians of the Temple they claimed especially the respect of the nation.

Next morning found Him once more on the way to the Temple. "Rabbi," exclaimed Peter, in wonder, as they passed the tree on which Jesus had sought figs the day before—"The fig-tree which Thou cursedst is withered away." It had, indeed, already shrivelled up.

The question gave another opportunity for impressing on the Twelve a truth, which, above all others, He had sought to fix in their hearts during His three years' intercourse with them—that, as His apostles, commissioned to establish and spread His Kingdom, they would be able, if they had an unwavering faith in God and in Him, to overcome all difficulties, however apparently insuperable.

"See," replied He, "that you learn from this tree to have firm trust in God. Believe me, if you have such faith, and let no doubt or wavering enfeeble it, you will be able to do not only such things,

hereafter, as you have seen done to this tree, but, to use the expression you so often hear from the Rabbis, when they intend to speak of overcoming the greatest difficulties, or achieving the most unlikely ends—you will be able, as it were, to bid this mountain rise, and cast itself into the sea. All depends, however, on your faith being simple and undoubting, for anything less dishonours God. He who has such child-like trust in Him, may confidently expect his prayers to be heard. When you pray, believe that prayer is, in very deed, answered, and your faith will be honoured by God granting what you seek, for, as His children, and my disciples, you will ask only what is in accordance with His will. Only, you must ever, in your prayers, be in that frame of loving tenderness to your fellow-men, which true faith in God, as His sons, always brings with it. Strife and division destroy your spiritual life, and weaken that faith by which, alone, you can do great things. As you stand at your prayers, as your manner is, you must have no anger, no revenge in your hearts, else you will not be heard. The spirit of frank forgiveness, which springs from true love to God, must, beforehand, have forgiven all who have injured you. For how can you hope that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins against Him, if you do not forgive offences against yourselves?"

But the moments were precious, for His hours were numbered. Always, from the first, intensely energetic, He was now, if possible, more so than ever, that He might utilize every instant for His great purpose. With calm undismayed resolution, each morning saw Him in the Temple, as soon as it was opened. He would show that He was no Jacobin, no revolutionist. Had He been so, how easily might He have taken advantage of the popular enthusiasm, at His entry to the city, or at His cleansing of the Temple Courts. Instead of doing so, He would proclaim the true nature of His Kingdom, by the one means He employed to establish it—the power of persuasion. He would devote His last hours, as He had all His public life, to teaching. By His words alone would He prevail, for they had the irresistible and deathless force of truth, and, as such, would found in every heart whose convictions they reached, a kingdom that must spread, and could never perish.

Meanwhile, His enemies, irresolute what course to pursue to strike Him down; determined to do so but afraid of the popular feeling they might invoke in His favour; watched every opportunity to facilitate decisive action. Their bearing had acquitted Him of all further responsibility towards them. He had brought the truth home to them in their central stronghold; had made it unmistakable what He demanded in the name of His Father;—that they should begin the reform and salvation of the nation, by reforming themselves its leaders; that they should be true shepherds, and not hirelings; sincere in their religion, and not actors. Such demands, in themselves, proved His Messiahship, for they bore on their front the evidence that they were

from God, and, if accepted, He also must be, who had thus been sent from God to proclaim them. The internal evidence of His acts and words thus established His highest claims, for truth and goodness are their own witness, in the universal conscience. But the hierarchy had shown themselves incapable of reform. Like the barren fig-tree, they bore only leaves, and must be left to the righteous indignation of God.

He had not been long instructing the people, who flocked to see and hear Him, before some of the Temple authorities came to Him, determined to bring Him to account for His act of the day before, which had been an intrusion on their duties as Temple-inspectors; and for His assuming to teach as a Rabbi, without any licence from the schools, which was contrary to established rule. They seem to have been a deputation sent officially, and consisted of some of the higher priests—heads of the different courses—some Rabbis, and some of the "elders"—the ancient senators or representatives of the people—who, as a body, had existed through all political changes, from the days of Moses. Interrupting Jesus as He taught, they now abruptly asked Him by what authority He acted as He had done, and was doing.

They, doubtless, hoped that He would claim divine authority, and that they, thus, might have ground for a charge against them. But He was not to be snared. He showed Himself the dreaded, prompt, keen disputant, ready to turn defence into attack. Careful to avoid giving any handle for misrepresentation, instead of answering their question, He evaded it, by asking one in His turn. "Before I answer your question," said He, "let me ask you—Did John the Baptist, in his great work, act in obedience to God, as one sent by Him, or was he unauthorized?" To be themselves put to the question; to be forced to give a reply, instead of listening to one, was sufficiently embarrassing, but the question itself was still more so. It involved much. Jesus evidently associated Himself with John as He had never before done. He implied that the man who had been the terror of Pharisees and priests, and their victim—the man of the people, who had roused such an unprecedented excitement,—was His Forerunner and Herald. He spoke of John's baptism as a commission from God, and evidently claimed that His own entry to Jerusalem, His preaching of the Kingdom of Heaven, His cleansing the Temple, and His claim to be the Messiah, were no less by divine authority.

He, Himself, might say all this if He pleased, but, that they should have to say it, was to force them to become His advocates and apologists. Yet, what could they do, for was it not clear to all men not blind to the truth, that John was no mere adventurer, but a noble servant of God? But to own that he was so, would only bring down on themselves the crushing question, "Why then did ye not believe what he said respecting yourselves, and what he said of Me? for his witness, alone, is enough to prove that I come from God." On the

other hand, to denounce him as an impostor was dangerous, for his memory was cherished by the people at large, as that of a national hero, the last of the mighty line of prophets. To avoid so disastrous a dilemma, therefore, they were driven to the feeble evasion—that they could not tell whether John's mission was from God or not.

"If so," replied Jesus, "then clearly he did not need your authority, since you never thought it worth while to sanction, or even decide respecting him, and you can have no claim to authorize me, or to withhold authority from me. I, myself, decline, therefore, to tell by what authority I act; if it was indifferent in the case of John, it is equally so in mine."

He had silenced His opponents, but would not let them leave without once more trying to open their eyes to their false position.

"Let me tell you a parable," He continued. "A certain man had two sons. He came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work to-day in the vineyard.' But he answered, 'I will not;' yet, afterwards, he repented and went. And he came to the second son, who, on receiving the same command, at once answered,—'Yes, Sir.' But he did not go. Let me ask you, which of the two do you think, did the will of his father?"

The perfect composure and the consummate art, with which He addressed them, were equally perplexing; for high dignitaries of the Jewish religious world must have been little accustomed to be put in such a position before the multitude. But an answer could not be refused, and the question was framed in such a way, that they could give none but the one which Jesus required for His complete justification, and their own condemnation. Hardly seeing what it implied, they readily answered,—"The first." They were now in His hands. "You say rightly," replied He, "for when John came calling you, in the name of God,—you priests, scribes, and elders,—to repentance and righteousness, you honoured him by ready professions, and smooth compliance, promising all good works of a pious and holy life, and yet you held aloof after all, and showed, by your neglect to obey him, that you disbelieved his message. You are the second son, who said yes, but did not go into the vineyard."

"On the other hand, the publicans and harlots whom you despise, the common people at large, whom you reckon cursed of God; who had roughly and wickedly refused to do right, and had even gone to the utmost in sin, repented at the summons of John, believing his words, and sought earnestly to enter into the Kingdom of God. They, therefore, condemn you, O ye leaders of the people, for, by your own showing, they have done the will of their Father in Heaven, but you have not."

"It has, indeed, been always the same. As, in John's day, ye would not hear him, and in the end persecuted him to the death, so have you and your fathers done in all generations. You, indeed, are worse than they all, for you seek to do even worse. Hear another parable."

He had spoken of the call of God by the mouth of John, and by

implication affirmed that His own experience, as the successor of the Baptist in his great work, had been the same. He now glanced at the history of the theocracy, and at the sins of their party, from its earliest days. He recounted the long roll of the servants of God whom they had persecuted and misused, from the first to the last, now no longer John, but a far greater—Himself. In doing so, He now first openly, before them, called Himself the Son of God, and left them to feel that He now stood as such in their presence, awaiting the fate of other messengers of His Father at their hands.

"A certain man," said He, adopting a parable of Isaiah's, "planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and hewed out a wine-cistern in the hill-side, into which to press the wine, and built a tower for the watchers, to guard the vineyard, and agreed with husbandmen to work it on his behalf, and went into a far country, for a long time. And when the fruit season drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive for him his fruits. But they took them, and beat one and killed another, and stoned a third. He then sent other servants, more numerous than the first; but the husbandmen treated them as badly, for they beat one, cast stones at another, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away, not only empty-handed, but shamefully treated. Some of the rest they beat, others they killed, and they refused to pay the fruits they owed.

"Having yet, therefore, a son,—his only and well-beloved,—he determined to send him to them, thinking that, though they had treated his servants so badly, they would be sure to show his son respect. But instead of this, when they saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the son, come let us kill him, and the vineyard, which he should have inherited, will be ours.' So they took him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

"Let me ask you now, what will the lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?"

The dignitaries thus addressed could not, in the presence of the crowd listening to all that had passed, refuse the only possible answer: "He will come and miserably destroy these wretched men," said their spokesman, "and give the vineyard to others, who will render him his fruits in their seasons." The meaning of the parable had already flashed on the minds of some of them, and the answer was followed by a deep "God forbid!" from several voices.

"Looking full and steadily at them, Jesus now kept them from retiring by a further question.

"Did you never read in the Scriptures," said He, "this text, 'The stone which the builders rejected is made the chief corner-stone—the main foundation; Jehovah hath done this; marvellous is it in our eyes?'"

The meaning was clear. The corner-stone of the Kingdom of God, of which those in His presence claimed to be the chief men, was, in their own mode of speech, only a figurative name for the Messiah, or

whom its existence and completion depended, as a building depends on its foundation and support. The Psalm quoted had been sung, it is believed, by Israel, on the first Feast of Tabernacles, after the return from captivity. Its historical reference was primarily to the Jewish nation—rejected by the heathen, but chosen again by God as the foundation of His earthly kingdom; but, in a higher spiritual sense, the Rabbis themselves understood it of the Messiah, and thus there could be no doubt in the mind of any Jew that when now applied by Christ to Himself, it was a direct claim of Messianic dignity.

"You know this verse, do you not?" continued Jesus: "Well, then—because the stone which you have rejected has been chosen by God as the foundation-stone of His New Spiritual Kingdom, every one who shall fall on it—that is, every one who, by rejecting me, the Messiah, shall have drawn down on himself destruction—will perish; but he on whom it will fall—he, I mean, on whom I, the Messiah, will let loose my avenging judgments, for his rejection of me—will be crushed to pieces, small as the dust or chaff that is scattered to the winds.

"Therefore, I say to you, the Kingdom of God shall be taken from Israel, and from you, its present heads, and be given to a nation who will render to God the fruits He has a right to claim from it."

The guilty consciences of the chief priests and Pharisees addressed, felt, instinctively, that in these parables He had pointed to them. The vineyard of God, separated from the wilderness of heathenism was, clearly, Israel. The Jews had been favoured by having the "noble vine" of divine institutions among them. The tower which protected them, was the Temple of God; the husbandmen were the successors of Moses; the Priests, Rabbis, and Pharisees, the representatives of God, to whom of old He had left His vineyard when He returned to heaven from Mount Sinai; with the charge to tend it, and to render Him duly its fruits. The servants sent were, clearly, the prophets, from their first appearance, in the distant past, to John the Baptist. They had been despised, beaten, martyred. Only one could follow them—the last and highest representative of God, who should have commanded respect even from murderers—His only and well-beloved Son, the Messiah, who had come, not as the nation fancied, to bring them political glory and earthly prosperity, but to receive and bear to His Father the fruits which, kept back for hundreds of years, could no longer be left unrendered. But Jesus, the Messiah, had long foreseen His fate. He had had it before His eyes every hour since His public entry to Jerusalem. He, the rightful heir of the vineyard, had been received by the husbandmen with jealous eyes and deadly purposes. The revolt He had come to end had grown rampant. It had risen from a refusal to render the fruits, to a rejection of their dependence, and a daring resolution to take the vineyard into their own hands: to cast out God, in casting out Him whom He had sent. The fierce anger of God could not long delay. The rebels, smitten by His wrath, must perish. The vine-

yard must pass into other hands. But "the others" could only be the heathen, whom Israel despised. Loyal to the Son, whom Israel had rejected and slain; His disciples and followers, gathered from other nations, would be entrusted with the inheritance. Changing the figure, these would willingly accept, as the foundation and chief corner-stone of the New Kingdom of God, Him whom the first builders—of whom those now before Him were the representatives —had rejected. Was there any doubt that God would transfer that kingdom to those thus loyal to His Son? He, who now stood before them, and who at any moment might be cast out of the Temple with ignominy, and slain, must be the foundation of the New Theocracy which was to supplant the Old!

The first open attempt at violence followed this parable. The hierarchical party felt that they were meant, and that Jesus had dared to call Himself the chief corner-stone of the future Kingdom of God, which was to rise in the place of that with which all their dignities and interests were bound up. With wild Eastern frenzy, they sought to arrest Him on the spot. But as looks and words, passing among them, betrayed their intention to the crowds around, these would not let Him be taken, counting Him, if not the Messiah, at least a prophet. Some, bolder than the rest, possibly laid hands on Him, but they were forced by the surging multitude to let go. They had to leave the place, and suffer Jesus to escape for the moment. But they had power, and organization, and the people would not always be round Him!

Left in peace, the unwearying Divine Man once more calmly betook Himself to His task of teaching all who would hear.

The die had finally been cast, and the open breach between Him and the Church authorities had been proclaimed by Himself in His last parables. Full of lofty indignation at the hypocrisy and wilful blindness of His adversaries, no less than of compassion for the multitude, He could not repress the crowding thoughts which the last hours raised in His soul, and, as usual, they found expression in additional parables.

"The Kingdom of Heaven," He began, "is like a king who made a marriage-feast for his son, and sent forth his servants, as the custom is, to tell those who had already been invited that the time had now come. But, though thus once and again summoned, they would not come. Yet, the king, unwilling, in his goodness, that they should not enjoy the feast; in spite of this, sent, once more, other servants to invite them again. 'Come,' ran his message, 'for I have prepared the first meal of the feast; my oxen and fatlings have been killed, and all things are ready: come to the marriage.' But they made light of this fresh invitation as well, and went off, one to his farm, another to his merchandise, while still others took his servants, and ill-treated, and even killed them. Then the king was angry, and sent his soldiers, and destroyed these murderers, and burned their city.

Meanwhile, he said to his servants, 'The marriage feast is ready, but those who have been called were not worthy. Go, therefore, to the highways, where the roads cross, and there are most passers-by, and invite to the feast as many as ye find.'

"So the servants went forth from the palace of the king to the roads and cross-ways, and gathered together all, both evil and good, who were willing to accept their invitations, and the feast-chamber was filled with guests.

"The king had made all preparations for the guests being nobly arrayed in festal robes, so as to be worthy to appear before him.

"But, now, when he came in to see the guests, he saw among them a man who had not put on a marriage-robe. And he said to him, 'Friend, how is it that you have come in hither without a marriage garment? You must needs have known that I provided robes, fit for my presence, for all my guests, and, not less, how great a slight and disrespect it is to refuse what is thus offered; you know that to do so is to raise the severest indignation in a king thus offended.'

"But the man was speechless, for he could not excuse himself.

"Then said the king to his attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and cast him out into the thick darkness outside.'"

"Ye know," added Jesus, "how dark in the night our streets are, in which no windows open, and which no lights illumine. That darkness is but a type of the awful night into which he will be cast out, who appears at the marriage feast of the Messiah's kingdom, without the marriage-robe provided by my Father. In that darkness there will, indeed, be weeping and gnashing of teeth, for though multitudes are invited to the feast of the heavenly kingdom, many neglect to secure the marriage-robe, without which no one can see the king!"

The parable was an enforcement of those just addressed to the priests and Rabbis, but with various additional lessons. The haughty sons of Jerusalem heard once more, that when the kingdom of the Messiah should be set up in its glory, God would call the heathen to a share in it, while the people of Israel, with their religious leaders—because, as a nation, they had rejected His repeated invitations—would no longer be the one people of God. Still more, they would be visited with the avenging wrath of God, in the destruction of Jerusalem, even before the final triumphant establishment of the New Divine Kingdom. Yet, among the heathen invited to enter it, as among the Jews, God, at the day of judgment, when the kingdom was finally set up for eternity, would separate and judge those who had been wanting in loyalty to Him, and had come into His presence without the preparation demanded. Such would be cast into the outer darkness of Gehenna.

Thus, in the very presence of imminent death, there was the same tranquillity and repose as on the free hills of Galilee, or in the safe retreat of Cæsarea Philippi: the same stupendous claims as Head of

the New Kingdom of God, and King over the souls of men, for time and eternity. Within a few hours of crucifixion, and conscious of the fact; in the intervals of mortal contest with the whole forces of the past and present, the wandering Galilæan Teacher, meek and lowly in spirit, so that the poorest and the youngest instinctively sought Him; full of divine pity, so that the most sunken and hopeless penitent felt He was their friend: indifferent to the supports of influence, wealth, or numbers; alone and poor; the very embodiment of weakness, as regarded all visible help, still bore Himself with a serene dignity more than human. In the name of God He transfers the spiritual glory of Israel to His own followers; throws down the barriers of caste and nationality; extends the new dominion of which He is Head, to all races, and through all ages, here and hereafter; predicts the divine wrath on His enemies in this world, as the enemies of God, and announces the decision of the final judgment as turning on the attitude of men towards Himself and His message. The grandeur of soul which could so utterly ignore the outward and apparent, and realize the essential and eternal; the conscious majesty in the midst of humiliation and danger; the absolute trust that, if the present belonged to His adversaries, the everlasting future, in earth and heaven, was all His own, could spring in such a heart, only because it felt that it was not alone, but that, unseen by man, a greater than man was ever with Him. Only when we realize Him as enjoying unclouded and absolute communion with eternal truth and love —Man, but also the Incarnate Divine—can we hope to solve the mystery.

CHAPTER LVI.

JERUSALEM.

It was still Tuesday, and Jesus still remained in the Temple courts. The deputation from the Temple authorities had come to Him in the early morning, only to retire mortified and silenced, but the heads of all parties were threatened by One who demanded changes so fundamental. All alike, therefore, however hostile at other times, made common cause in trying to get the hated Reformer into their power. It was the same spirit, as, in after ages, when far less fiercely roused, burned Arnold of Brescia, and John Huss, and strangled and burnt Savonarola, and slew the thousands of victims of the Inquisition:—the *non possumus* of a corrupt ecclesiastical corporation, which would murder in the name of God, because that could be called orthodoxy; but would not reform, because to do so would touch their interests and their order.

Plot, therefore, thickened on plot. Having themselves failed, the authorities sent some of the Pharisees in company with some Hero-

dians, otherwise their deadly enemies, to try to commit Him by the answers He might give to treacherous questions. Obscure men were chosen, men unknown to Jesus. They were to pretend themselves anxious, as sincere Jews, scrupulous in all duties, to get His counsel on a point much disputed. The snare was no longer laid in the sphere of Rabbinical law, but in the more dangerous one of political obligation, that an ambiguous answer might compromise Him before the Roman procurator. If they succeeded, it would at once transfer the odium of His arrest from themselves: ensure His not being rescued, and make it possible to get Him put to death, for the power of death was in Pilate's hands alone.

The Pharisees and Herodians, though from different principles, were equally disloyal in heart to the Roman Emperor. The extreme section of the former had developed into the sanguinary zealots—the extreme left, or irreconcilables, of Jewish politics: the Herodians were Jewish royalists, who sighed for the old days of Archelaus and the Edomite dynasty. With dexterous craft, the ultra-orthodoxy of the Pharisaic party allied itself with the discontented loyalist faction, to tempt Jesus, if possible, to some bold expression of opinion on the hated question of the payment of the Roman poll tax, which had already excited fierce insurrections. If He held that payment should be refused, He would compromise Himself with the Romans: if He sanctioned it, He would embitter Himself both with the Herodians and the ultra-national party. Danger lay on each hand. On the one, the fierce eyes of the multitude, on the other, the bailiffs of Herod: here, the cry, "Publicans, sinners;" there, a Roman dungeon. To disarm suspicions they used

> "Smooth dissimulation, taught to grace
> A devil's purpose with an angel's face."

"Teacher," said they, with soft accents and humble looks, "we know—indeed, we are fully convinced—that thou teachest what God requires of man as his duty in all matters, truly and rightly, and troublest not thyself about the opinions of men, but fearlessly and nobly speakest what truth demands, without thinking of consequences, and without caring who hears Thee, whether he be rich, or poor, learned or simple, powerful or lowly. Is it lawful for us Jews to pay tribute to Cæsar or not? We are the people of God: God is our King: is it in accordance with the allegiance we owe to Him, as such, to recognize any other king, as we must do if we pay taxes to Cæsar?" It was on such reasoning that Judas the Gaulonite had based his fierce revolt against payment of the tax demanded after the census of Quirinius, and his name and opinions were venerated by the closely-packed multitude around. Every Galilæan among them expected a stern avowal of the illegality of the demand. For Judas had taught the youth of the country that to pay taxes to a heathen state was not allowable, and defiled the land, and thousands

had already died for this cause, or lived as fugitives in the caves of the north.

The mode of approach adopted was well fitted to throw Jesus off His guard. Recognition, even by Pharisees, as the brave, frank, fearless Man of God, and appeal to Him in a matter which might cost the questioner his life, were, alike, ensnaring. Frankness demanded frankness. The courage of the question demanded as much in the reply. Jesus knew, besides, that such ideas were always fermenting in the mind of the Pharisee youth, and that the Herodians, instead of being friends of Rome, anxiously desired a change. Why, therefore, should He distrust the new allies? The Roman supremacy was, undoubtedly, at bottom, a usurpation. The strict Jew recognized no ruler but Jehovah, and, since Jesus had devoted His life to founding a "Kingdom of Heaven," it seemed only natural that He should hold His followers free from obligations to the kingdoms of the world. They could not comprehend the spirituality of His conceptions, for had they not had a secret suspicion, that, in spite of appearances, He really meditated an attack on the Roman government, they would hardly have asked such a question. Could they only bring Him to reveal these secret thoughts, His death at the hands of the Romans was certain, as a crafty conspirator, and the hierarchical party would get their revenge, without the odium of exacting it, against the daring and determined transgressor of Rabbinical law.

But Christ's answer scattered their subtle plans to the wind.

"You hypocrites!—you actors!" replied He; "I see through your designs, and value your deceitful flatteries at their worth. Why do you thus seek to entrap me, under pretence of religious scruples, which you wish me to solve for you? Bring me the coin you pay as the Roman tax." A Roman denarius was presently brought Him—a coin which the Jew hated intensely, for it was that in which the poll tax was paid, and was, thus, the sign of slavery to the heathen. Besides, it bore the idolatrous image of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, and the legend of his authority. The Emperors, to Vespasian, to spare Jewish feeling, had a special coinage struck for Judea, without a likeness on it, and only the name of the Emperor and the traditional Jewish emblems. But other coins, stamped with the image of Augustus or Tiberius, naturally found their way to Jerusalem, especially at the feasts. Such a coin was now handed to Jesus, with the hope, doubtless, that the double abomination—the idolatrous image on one side, and the legend of Jewish subjection on the other—might provoke Him to some treasonable expression. But the result proved the reverse.

"Whose image and superscription is this?" asked He.

"Cæsar's."

"Render, then, to Cæsar, the things that are Cæsar's, and to God, the things that are God's."

Nothing could be said after such an answer. The head of the Em-

peror on the coin, and the legend round it, were overt proofs of the existing state of things, and of the *de facto* right of the imperial government, as such, to levy taxes. Hence followed, not only the lawfulness, but the duty, of paying what was thus due to the Emperor, including the tax in question, since the very coin in which it was payable showed, on its face, that it was the lawful claim of the ruling power. "But," added He, "your theocratic duty is in no way compromised by such political duties as subjects. Pay also, what is demanded by God as your spiritual King, as a legal claim of His government,—the Temple tax, and all that He demands from you besides as His spiritual subjects." The treacherous question was answered with a clearness, precision, and wisdom, which defined, for all ages, the relations of His kingdom to the civil power. The Christian was not to oppose existing authority, but to unite his duty to it, with his duty to God. The political and religious spheres, were declared not opposite but co-existing, and harmonious though distinct.

To realize the immense significance of this utterance, delivered as it was, on the moment, without an instant's hesitation, we must remember that it introduced an entirely new conception of the relation of Church and State. Till then, over the world, they had been identical. The Cæsar was chief priest as well as emperor, and the colleges of priests and augurs were political institutions. In Judea, the two spheres, henceforth to be separated, had, hitherto, been confused and intermixed; the civil power was the instrument of the priest; its institutions were religious, and the priesthood had striven after kingly power and rank. Henceforward, the new society was to stand apart from political interests and authorities. The State was no longer indispensable to its perfect completeness and efficiency. The sphere of religion was that of the conscience, which is, by its nature, free. The State cannot leave the payment of its impositions to goodwill; it must enforce them, if they be refused: but force is utterly opposed to the idea of the Kingdom of God. In it voluntary service alone has value. What is yielded to force, without inner truth and love, is, before God, as if not given at all; what is given in hypocritical self-interest, is an abomination to Him.

No wonder such an answer filled the messengers of the hierarchical party with astonishment. It was not only not treasonable, but indirectly pressed on the hierarchy the conscientious discharge of its duties to Rome. But they could not grasp its whole significance, for they had no conception of a religious community which had not the right and power to inflict civil penalties. The Old Testament economy was, itself, the State. Obedience to its requirements was enforced by the national courts, and an attempt to change or transgress them was severely punished. Jesus Himself, indeed, was about to atone with His life for His offences against the established and traditional religious usages and opinions of the ruling caste. The idea of freedom of conscience and faith, which was the very starting-point

of His teaching, was a stumbling-block, and a ground of bitterness, to His age. The conception of a religion, in which there was no responsibility except to God, was beyond it.

All the influential Jewish parties had now united against Him, as a dangerous innovator, an enemy of the Rabbinical "hedge" of human prescriptions and refinements, which was the essence of the religion of the day. If tolerated longer He might win over the people to favour His demand for fundamental reform. The Pharisees and Herodians had hardly left Him, when some aristocratic Sadducees renewed the attack. The clergy of all classes, from highest to lowest, were against Him. His support was among the people. His appearance in the Temple, His assumption of authority over it, and His lofty claim to be the Messiah, filled the official world with alarm, and united them to crush Him. But the Sadducees had none of the earnestness of the Pharisees. They were the prototypes of the scoffing and infidel priests whom Luther found, almost fifteen hundred years after, in Rome; who parodied even the words of the Holy Sacraments they were busied in consecrating. The Pharisees had early taken offence at Jesus, for they were zealots for the Rabbinism which He attacked; but the Sadducees—few, rich, dignified; the primate and bishops of the day—affected at first only to despise the Galilæan, who, like so many before Him, had stirred up commotion for the time among His rude compatriots. Even now, in Jerusalem, they were disposed to look at Him and His adherents with a lofty contempt, and to laugh the foolish rabble who listened to Him out of their fanatical dreams. His claims were, in their opinion, more silly than dangerous, and they would, therefore, bring the whole matter into contempt, by making it ridiculous.

For this end they had carefully selected, from the cases invented by Rabbinical casuistry, that of a wife, who was supposed, in accordance with the Mosaic law, to have married in succession seven brothers, each of whom died without children. Though an imaginary, it was a possible case, for the Law enacted, that, if a husband died without leaving a son to perpetuate his name, his brother must marry the widow, and the first-born son of this second marriage was to be entered in the public register as the son of the dead man.

Not believing in the doctrine of the resurrection themselves, and supposing that Jesus, who, they had heard, taught it, held the same notions as they ascribed to the Pharisees, they fancied they could cover Him and it with ridicule, by a skilful use of this case. Some of the Rabbis, indeed, had purer conceptions than others, teaching that in the kingdom of the Messiah, after the resurrection, or at least in the future world, the just would neither eat, drink, nor marry. But they were exceptions, for the popular belief, as expressed by the Rabbis generally, was gross and unworthy in the extreme. The resurrection would not only restore men to their former bodies, but to their bodily appetites and passions; they would not only eat, drink, and

take wives, but would rise in the clothes they wore in life, if buried with them, and even with all their bodily blemishes and defects, "that men might know them to be the same persons as they knew in life." Even the case supposed by the Sadducees, had been settled in principle,—"for the woman who had married two husbands in this world," says the Book Sohar, "will be given to the first, in the world to come."

Fancying there was no sanction, either for the immortality of the soul or the resurrection, in the Pentateuch, the Sadducees sneered at both doctrines. "They deny the resurrection after death," says the Talmud, "and maintain that it is as vain to hope that a cloud which has vanished will appear again, as that the grave will give back its dead."

Coming to Jesus, with a well-bred politeness, they put their question softly, addressing Him respectfully, as the Pharisees and Herodians had done, as Rabbi, for which they used the current Greek equivalent.

"Your ideas respecting these things are wrong," replied Jesus, "from your not understanding correctly the Scriptures which refer to them. The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage, because they are mortal, and marriage is necessary to perpetuate the race. But those who shall be counted worthy to enter the Heavenly Kingdom of the Messiah, and will be raised from the dead to do so, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more, for they will be immortal, like angels; and hence there is no reason for their marrying and raising children, to take their place, as with men in this world. As sons of the resurrection, they are sons of God, and, like the angels, will live for ever.

"As to the resurrection of the dead, you have referred to Moses. But let me also refer to him. Even he shows, in the passage in which we are told of the vision at the burning bush, that the dead are raised. For he calls Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Now, God cannot be the God of persons who do not exist, and, therefore, the patriarchs, though their bodies were dead, must themselves have been still living—living, I mean, in the separate state, and awaiting the resurrection. Thus, God regards all the dead as still living, and how easy, if this be the case, for Him to raise them hereafter!"

"Rabbi, Thou hast spoken well," said some Scribes, as He closed. They were, for the moment, won to His side, by His triumph over their bitter Sadducee enemies. Meanwhile, the people were more than ever astonished at His teaching, and disposed to think Him a prophet.

It soon spread abroad that the Sadducees had been silenced, but the Pharisees had already prepared a new attempt to entrap Him. One of them, who had listened to the dispute—a Scribe, or master of the Law—had been selected to be their spokesman, but, as it proved,

was only half-hearted in his task. The Rabbis taught that there were great and small commands in the laws—the one hard and weighty, the other easy and of less moment. Their idea of greatness, however, was independent of the religious importance of a particular precept, and had regard only to their own external precepts, founded on it. Thus, commands were especially called great, to the transgression of which excommunication was attached; such as observance of the Sabbath, in their sense; of circumcision, of the minutest rites of sacrifice and offering, of ceremonial purity, and the like. The precepts respecting the structure of the booths at the Feast of Tabernacles, and of the washing the hands, were, on the contrary, counted small. But, in spite of this nominal difference, obedience to all was alike imperative, and, in practice, both classes were treated as alike weighty. To honour one's parents and to let a mother-bird fly when the young are taken; not to kill; and to wash the hands, were put on a level, and had an equal reward. Even the injunctions of the Rabbis respecting the zizith, or tassels of their scarves, were "great." "The words of the Rabbis," says the Talmud, "are to be prized above those of the Law, for the words of the Law are both weighty and light, but those of the Rabbis are all weighty." If Jesus answered as the Pharisees hoped, He would once more commit Himself, as an enemy of the traditions, and expose Himself to new charges.

It may be, there was, besides, a lurking desire to elicit some utterance respecting His claims to a more than human authority. Stones had been lifted more than once, to put Him to death as a blasphemer, who made Himself equal with God. How would He express Himself in the face of the first command of the Decalogue?

His reply, as always, goes to the root of the matter, simplifying the whole sweep of "the Ten Words" into brief and easily remembered principles. He avoided the least approach to anything that could give offence to the most zealous supporter of the Old Testament, and, at the same time, gave no handle for accusation of any slight of the Rabbinical precepts.

"Teacher," said the legalist, "which is the great and first commandment in the Law?"

No one could take Jesus by surprise at any time, but in this sphere He was, if we may so speak, especially at home, as He had shown a few days before, in His conversation with the young ruler, near Jericho. With a full sense of the peril of His position, He answered with more fulness than usual, leaving no ground for misapprehension, but giving as little for offence. He had named only one command as great, to the young ruler—the love of our neighbour—but to the Scribe He gave two, as forming, together, "the great and first commandment." Neither was abridged, or subordinated to the other, and in the two He formed the principle from which obedience of all the rest would follow. With sure hand, He turned first to the Fifth

Book of Moses, then to the Third, for the two great guiding stars which all the host of lesser commands followed. "Hear, O Israel," said He: "Jehovah, our God, is one God"—the words in which every Israelite, each morning, confessed his faith in Jehovah—"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the great and first commandment. A second is like it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other command greater than these. On these two hang the whole Law and the prophets."

He had once more shown His greatness as a teacher, by summing up our whole duty in the fundamental conceptions of religion and morality: in the love to God, which is also love to His children, our fellow-men. Nor were the various commands of any part of the Scriptures overlooked; the religious and moral precepts of the prophets, no less than the Law, were honoured and made binding for ever.

"Thou hast spoken well and truly," broke in the scribe, "for God is One, and there is no other but He, and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as one's self, is of greater consequence than all the whole burnt offerings of the Law, the morning and evening sacrifice, and all other sacrifices besides."

"Thou art not far from the kingdom of God," replied Jesus, as He heard words which showed that the speaker was no mere man of his party, but was accessible to higher impulses. The Galilæan had proved very different from what he had been led to anticipate. His answers had not only silenced His enemies, but had half won some of them to His side. Henceforth, all, alike, kept aloof from one from whom chief priests and Rabbis equally went away humbled.

As on the day before, the defeat of all the attacks on Him was followed by His taking the offensive, but only in a mild, instructive conflict with prejudice and misapprehension. He had openly assumed the Messiahship, but in a sense entirely in contrast with the popular conception. That He fulfilled none of the conditions expected alike by the authorities and the people, in the Messiah, had given the former the pretext for spreading it abroad that He was an impostor; a cry caught up, in the end, only too widely, by the Jerusalem populace. He would now show the Pharisees, if they chose to listen, that their preconceptions were wrong, when tested by Scripture, and thus expose the worthlessness of the arguments on which they based their light denial of His Messiahship.

Turning unexpectedly to a knot of Pharisees who hung near, to watch as He was teaching, He asked them—

"What is your opinion about the Messiah; I mean, as to His lineage and extraction—whose son is He?"

"The son of David," answered they, at once.

"How is it, then," replied Jesus, "that David, in the hundred and tenth Psalm, which you Rabbis justly refer to the Messiah, says, by

inspiration of God, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, the Messiah, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. Thy mighty sceptre will the Eternal stretch forth out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thy foes.' If He be David's Lord, how can He be his Son?"

The true answer they must have given, had they given any, was one which had not entered their thoughts. It would have been—He is David's Son by His human descent, but, as the Son of God, proceeding from the Father, He is exalted far above David and all mankind, and therefore was rightly called, by David, his Lord. But this twofold relation of the Messiah to their great king, and, with it, the true estimate of the dignity and office of the Messiah, were not in their theology. The exposition of Jesus might displease the Rabbis, but it was heard with eager ears by the multitude around.

A new scene now opened. Day after day, the hostility of His enemies had shown itself more fierce, as they found it increasingly hopeless to overcome Him by legitimate weapons or argument. The people, however, were more friendly, and regarded Him as, at least, a prophet, if not the Messiah. He had hitherto maintained only a defensive attitude, but the clear purpose shown to put Him out of the way, made all further reserve or caution useless. With the calmness of a profound conviction, and the clearest statement of His grounds, He proceeded to open a vigorous attack, that the contrast between Himself and His opponents might be beyond question. Every one must be enabled to judge intelligently on which side he would take his place. He desired, henceforth, only a speedy decision of the struggle.

He now, therefore, broke out, before the multitude, in a last terrible denunciation of the moral and religious shortcomings of His adversaries. These He summed up under the two great heads of hypocrisy and selfishness; they made a pretence and a gain of religion. Yet their doctrines and decisions were substantially right; it was their practice He condemned.

"The Scribes and Pharisees," said He, "have taken possession of the seat of Moses, to continue his office as law-giver, by explaining and teaching the Law. They are his official successors; therefore, obey their decisions. But do not imitate their lives, for they teach what they do not practise. They heap together their rules and demands, into heavy burdens, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they will not help those whom they thus load by so much as the touch of a little finger. They shirk many rites and forms which they demand from others as sacred duties. Their requirements are a load on the conscience, which deadens and destroys it. To exalt their order, they make slaves of the people, paralyzing by their countless laws all true virtue, freedom, and love. They act only with an eye to effect; to be thought more religious than others; and reap consideration and profit from this reputation. They come out to pray in their most pious robes, especially now, at the feast, and wear phylacteries

of extra size on their forehead and arm that they may be noticed; and the very tassels hung, in honour of the Law, at the corners of their abbas, are larger than those of others. To get honour, they strive for the highest places at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and court salutations in the crowded market-place, and the sounding title, Rabbi. Have nothing to do with such proud names, for I, only, am your Rabbi or teacher, and all ye are brethren. They like to be called 'Father,' but call no teacher on earth your father, for one only is your Father; God in Heaven. And do not, like them, be called Leaders, for you have only one Leader, Me, the Messiah. The highest place among my disciples is quite otherwise obtained than among them, for he who seeks to be great among you can become so, as I have said before, only by being the servant of the rest. This lowliness is itself his greatness. For he who exalts himself shall be humbled at my coming, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Rising, as He proceeded, He now broke out into a lofty utterance of indignation at such principles and conduct.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye plunder the houses of desolate widows, left without protectors, and, to hide your doings, make long prayers while at such work! For you say in your hypocrisy, 'Long prayers make a long life,' and some of you boast that you pray nine hours a day! Believe me, you will receive for all this the greater damnation hereafter.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye stand in the gateway of the Kingdom of Heaven, that Kingdom I have come to set up, and not only do not yourselves enter, but even close the doors I have opened, that you may keep those from entering, who wish to do so.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Instead of helping men into the Kingdom of the Messiah, ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, that your party may profit by him, and, when he is gained, what do you make of him? A son of hell, by your example, two-fold more even than you are yourselves.

"Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'If any one swear by the Temple, it is not binding; but if he swear by the gold which belongs to the Temple—the gilding, the golden vessels, or the treasure—he is bound by his oath.' Fools and blind! for which is the greater, the gold, or the Temple that sanctifies the gold? You say, in the same spirit, 'If any one swear by the altar, his oath is not binding on him; but if he swear by the gift that he has laid on the altar, he must keep his oath.' Fools and blind! for which is the greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifies the gift? He who swears by the altar swears by it, and by all the things on it, and he who swears by the Temple swears by it, and by Him that dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by Him who sits on it.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! for ye affect to be so

strict in observing the Law that you pay a tenth to the Temple of even the sprigs of mint and anise and cummin in your garden borders, and yet at the same time you neglect the great commands of the Law; to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. You ought certainly to attend to the lighter demands of the Law, but surely not to leave the far greater neglected. Blind guides, who strain out the gnat from the wine and swallow the camel! Sticklers for worthless trifles, regardless of matters of moment.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye make clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but, within, they are full of robbery and incontinence. Blind Pharisee, clean first the inside of the cup and dish, that the wine taste no more of plunder and lust, and that the outside may not only seem clean by your washing it, but *be* clean, by the taking away of that defilement which your life gives it, in spite of your cleansings.

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! You are like the whitewashed tombs all over the land—fair outside, but full within of the deadliest uncleanness—the bones of men, and all corruption. You pass yourselves off as religious, but in your hearts you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Over against the eastern hall in which Jesus now stood, and from which He looked down into the Valley of the Kedron, lay, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, the tombs of the Prophets, the southmost of which is yet known as the tomb of Zechariah. In sight of these monuments, ranging His eyes from grave to grave, He burst out afresh—

"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, actors! Ye build fine tombs over the old prophets, and beautify those of the saints, and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in their martyrdom of these holy men.' But when you call them 'your fathers,' you bear witness that you are their sons—and you are, not only in natural descent, but in your spirit. You are of kin in heart to the prophet-murderers! Fill up, therefore, the measure of iniquity your fathers before you filled in their day, —by slaying me and those I shall send to you! Serpents! brood of vipers, for vipers your fathers were, and vipers are ye, how can ye escape the judgment of hell! That ye may not do so, behold, I send to you prophet-like Apostles, and Rabbis, and Scribes. Some of them ye shall kill and crucify; some ye shall scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city—that on you, the leaders of the people, may come the punishment of all the innocent, righteous blood shed on the earth; from the blood of righteous Abel to that of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, who was stoned by command of King Joash in the court of the Temple, between the shrine and the altar. Believe me, all these things will come in this generation." Zechariah, of old, had denounced the sin of Israel, as Jesus had that of the priests and Rabbis. "Why transgress ye," he had asked, "the command-

ments of the Lord? Ye cannot prosper! Because ye have forsaken Jehovah, He hath forsaken you."

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem," He continued, "that killest the prophets, and stonest those sent in love to thee; how often have I desired to gather thy children, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, and ye refused to come under my loving protection, by accepting me as the Messiah. Behold, your house is left to you! I go from it. The time of the divine help and guard, over you and your city, which I was sent to offer, is past.

"I tell you ye shall not see me henceforth, after my death, which is near at hand, till I appear again in my glory. Then, you shall be only too eagerly willing to hail me as the Messiah, though now ye refuse even to let others thus hail me. Then, when too late, you will cry, as the crowds did as I entered your city, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Thus, the breach between the Future and the Past was finally made complete. The whole hierarchy, from the high priest its primate, to the Levite its curate, and the Rabbi its university professor or tutor, had been denounced before the people, in language which they must resent if they were to retain any authority at all. Either Jesus, or the Church as it was, with all its innumerable personal interests, must perish. It had come to this, indeed, before this last tremendous indictment of the system, and the certainty that nothing could avert His being sacrificed to the fanaticism and vested interests arrayed against Him, had alone caused such a protest. He had no reasons for further reserve. It was fixed that He must die at their hands, and the irreconcilable opposition between the system for the sake of which He was to be martyred, and His own character and work, must, once more, for the last time, be brought out in full contrast, that every one might choose for himself for which he would decide.

The infinite moral grandeur and purity of Jesus, His absolute truth, His all-embracing love, His lowly humility, His sublime consecration to the will of His Father, His intense moral earnestness, His spirit of joyful self-sacrifice for the moral and spiritual good of mankind, shine out nowhere more transcendently, than when contrasted, in this parting lament, with the wretched sophistries and reverence for the infinitely little, which marked the Rabbinism He opposed. The spirit of the market or the booth, in religion, found no sanction at His hands; He would have no huckstering for heaven by a life of petty formalities; He abhorred all cant and insincerity, and all trading with religion; all striving after mere outward success, for ulterior and unworthy ends. He would have no divorce of religion from morality; it was with Him a living principle in the heart, not a rubric of external acts; its outward expression was a holy life, but the holiness without was only the blossoming of a similar holiness within. In Rabbinism, on the opposite, there was formal piety, with no moral earnestness: an absorbing zeal for artificial duties, with

which the conscience had nothing to do; and an elaborate multiplication of rules and rites, for the express aim of obtaining the absolute spiritual dependence of all, on the teaching caste. The whole system had been originated and developed to its fulness, to be a "hedge" round the Law, and thus secure fidelity to the politico-religious constitution of the nation, and its minutest details were strenuously enforced to secure this end. Unquestioning acceptance of tradition, and the deepening and extending of the ghostly influence of the authorities, were the two great points kept in view. There were true Israelites, like Nathanael, or Zechariah, or Simeon, or Joseph, in spite of a system thus lifeless and corrupting; but it was vain to hope for anything but evil, in the community at large, under its reign. Insincerity and immorality in the teachers of a religion can only multiply and perpetuate themselves in their disciples.

The theology and hierarchy of Judaism had become, in fact, what Jesus openly declared them—whitewashed sepulchres—pure to the eye, but with only death and corruption within. They had proved that they were so, by rejecting Him, because He demanded moral and religious reform. Wedded to the false and immoral, they rather killed Him than let Him lead them back to God.

Over such a state of things He could only raise His sad lamentation! Judaism had chosen its own way, and left Him to His.

CHAPTER LVII.

THE INTERVAL.

After His terrible parting denunciation of the religious leaders of the nation, Jesus passed into the great forecourt of the women, fifteen steps below that of the men. It was a wide space of a hundred and thirty-five cubits in length and breadth, and was open to the people at large. Popular assemblies, indeed, were at times held in it, and it was the scene of the torch-dance at the Feast of Tabernacles. It was especially frequented, however, by both sexes, because the building was there in which the pious presented their offerings.

Jesus had sat down to rest, after the multiplied excitements of the past hours, over against the treasury, where the continuous stream of persons casting in their money necessarily attracted His notice. As each came, He could judge by his appearance how much he threw in. The poor could only give paltry copper coins, but the rich cast in gold and silver; some, doubtless, from an honest zeal for the glory of God; others, because alms, in the sordid theology of the day, had their commercial value in the future world.

Among others, came a poor widow, with her two lepta—one-twelfth of our penny each—the smallest of copper coins. She could not have cast in less, for one lepton was not received as an offering. The sight

touched the heart of Jesus. "Believe me," said He, to those around, "this poor woman has cast in more than any one, for they have only given of their superfluity, but she, in her need—for she has less than enough—has thrown in all she had for her day's living."

Among the multitude of pilgrims to the feast, then in Jerusalem, were many foreign proselytes. That they should have come up, though heathens by birth, showed an earnest sincerity, for it exposed them to ridicule and even worse, from their own countrymen. Many of them, doubtless, men like the centurion at Capernaum, or like the Ethiopian eunuch, were men won over to faith in Jehovah, and to a loyal respect for the great doctrines of the Old Testament: proselytes of the gate, in distinction from the proselytes of righteousness, who, by circumcision, had become, in all religious and social respects, Jews. The spread of a Jewish population in all countries, and the immunities they enjoyed, had resulted in the conversion of great numbers of Gentiles, who were willing to pledge themselves to what were called the seven commands of Noah—the avoidance of murder, bloodshed, or robbery: obedience to the Jewish courts in matters of religion: the rejection of idolatry, and the worship of Jehovah: and to eat no freshly-killed and still bleeding flesh. They were received as "the strangers within the gate" of Israel, and could attend the synagogues, but could not pass beyond the Court of the Heathen, in the Temple.

Of this class, some Greeks, then at Jerusalem for the feast, which they were in the habit of attending, had heard much of Jesus: perhaps had seen Him and listened to His discourses, and were anxious to know Him personally, that they might have His personal counsels. Too modest to come direct, they applied to Philip, the only Apostle bearing a Greek name, though Andrew is of Greek origin. To him Philip forthwith mentioned the circumstance, and the two communicated it to Jesus. It filled His heart with much-needed joy, to welcome men who must have seemed to Him an earnest of His future triumphs, among the great heathen nations. As Bengel says, "it was the prelude of the transition of the kingdom of God from the Jew to the Gentile."

He went out to them, therefore, to the Court of the Heathen, and they, doubtless, heard from His lips the counsels desired. The incident brought to His mind, with fresh vividness and force, the nearness of His death, through which His salvation was to be brought to the heathen world at large, and His emotion broke forth in words, full of sublimity.

"The hour has come," said He, lifting His face, as we may believe, to heaven, as He spoke—"the hour appointed in the counsels of my Father, from eternity, when the Son of man shall enter into His glory by death. For it must be that I die, that my work may bear its due fruits—as the grain must fall into the ground and perish, that it may bring forth the harvest. Verily, verily, I say to you,

it must be so. My life remains limited and bound up in myself, as the life is in the seed, till I die. It cannot, till then, pass beyond me to others, and multiply. But when I die, I shall be like the corn, which, in its death, imparts its life to what springs from it.

"As it is needful for me thus to die, to make my work triumph, so, also, is it for you, my followers, in your own case. He who so loves his life as not to be willing to yield it for my kingdom, will lose eternal life hereafter; but he who, in this world, cheerfully gives up even his life for me, as if he hated it in comparison with loyalty to me, will gain life everlasting. If any man wish really to serve me, let him imitate me in my joyful readiness even to die; and he will receive, as his reward, that where I go, to the right hand of my Father in heaven, there, also, will he follow, and dwell with me: for if any one thus truly and self-sacrificingly serve me, my Father will honour him by giving him the glory of the life hereafter."

The awful vision of the immediate future, meanwhile, for a moment, raised a shrinking of human weakness. It was the foreshadowing of Gethsemane.

"Now, is my soul troubled," cried He, with a voice of infinite sadness. In His agony of soul, He hesitated for a moment, before all through which He had so soon to pass, and it seemed as if He were even now enduring it. "What shall I say?" He added, as if communing with Himself; "Shall I pray—Father, save me from the hour of darkness: take this cup from me? No, let it not be: all the past has been only a progress towards it, that by it I might glorify Thy name!" The momentary human shrinking from the Cross had passed away as soon as it had risen. The cloud that dimmed the clear heaven of His soul had disappeared. His trouble of soul gave place, on the instant, to the victorious consciousness of the great future to flow from His accomplishment of the purpose of God for the salvation of the world. Then, as if He were repeating aloud His inward thought, He burst forth into the words —"Father, glorify Thy name, as Thou hast purposed, through my death for man. I come to do Thy will, O God, and I give myself up to Thee!"

Forthwith came a wondrous attestation, sealing the divine authority of our Saviour's mission with the stamp of august and transcendent glory. Suddenly there sounded a voice from the cloudless April sky, with a volume that filled the heavens, so that some, overpowered by its grandeur, could not think of it as an utterance of articulate words, but fancied that it thundered—"I *have* glorified My name, already, in having sent Thee, and in all Thy sinless and gracious life, till now; and I *shall* glorify it again, by Thine entrance on Thy heavenly glory through the gates of death!"

"It thunders," muttered some, whose souls were least quick to realize what had happened. "No," said others, with truer religious

sensibility—"It was an angel speaking to Him. He is a prophet, at least; if not the Messiah Himself, and God speaks, thus, to Him, by a heavenly messenger." But the disciples around, and Jesus Himself, knew whence it came, and what were the precise words from the excellent glory.

"You may not understand," said Jesus to the disciples and the crowd, "whence this voice comes, and why it is sent. It is the voice of my Father in heaven, and comes, not for my sake, but for yours, to take away your unbelief, and to strengthen your faith. The time presses for your decision regarding me. Even now, the judgment of my Father is being given forth, against those who have rejected me as the Messiah. Through the victory of my kingdom, which my death will secure, and the spread of my name over the earth proclaim, the impotence of my enemies will be shown, and their guilt before God be made clear. He, especially, whom even you call the ruler of this world, and the great enemy of the kingdom of God—the prince of evil—will feel the greatness of my triumph, for his kingdom must yield to mine. My death, as the atonement between God and man, will deliver from his power and place under my protection, as the glorified Shepherd of the sheep, all who believe in my name. Nor will that triumph cease as time rolls on: age after age, till the last day, in ever wider sweep, it will subdue all things under me, and drive the kingdom of darkness from the world.

"So it shall be; for I, if I be lifted up from the earth by the death of the cross, as I know I shall be, and thus pass away from the world and return to my Father, shall draw all men to me; for the power of my cross will be universally felt, and the Holy Spirit, whom I shall send from the Father, will turn men's hearts to love and serve me. The prince of this world has, in Me, his conqueror; for I must reign till all things are put under my feet, and the world be won back to God."

The people round, accustomed to speak freely with the Rabbis on the subject of their addresses, had listened to Him respectfully, but were at a loss to reconcile His words with their preconceived ideas of the Messiah. In the Synagogue, they had heard passages read from the Scriptures, describing Him as a priest for ever, and His dominion as one which should never pass away or be destroyed, but stand for ever and ever, and had come to expect, in consequence, an everlasting reign of the Messiah upon earth. They were at a loss, therefore, to reconcile Christ's use of the name, Son of Man, which they applied to the Messiah, with the statement that, instead of dwelling on earth for ever, as a king over all nations, He should suffer the shameful death of crucifixion. The cross was already the stumbling-block to them it afterwards became so widely to their nation.

"We have heard out of the Law," said they, "that the Christ is to live for ever, on earth. What dost Thou mean, then, by saying that the Son of Man—a name by which we understand, the Christ—

must be crucified? Who is this Son of Man to whom Thou referrest? What dost Thou mean by using this name, when Thou speakest so contrary to Scripture?"

His time was too short to give a formal explanation. Nor would it have been of any effect in minds so prejudiced, for the fullest explanations of after days made no impression. He chose rather to urge on them, once more, the one course in which lay their eternal safety. Standing at the very close of His public ministrations, He threw into these last words of warning the whole intensity and earnestness of His soul.

"If you wish to comprehend what I have said about my being lifted up, let me tell you how all your questions and difficulties about it may be resolved. I shall be with you only a very little longer; make right use of that time to believe in me, the Light of the World, as the traveller makes use of the last moments of day, to reach safety, before darkness overtake him. With me, the light of truth, which now lights you, will be gone, and you know that he who walks in darkness knows not what way to go. While ye still have me, the Light of Men, believe in the light, that ye may receive illumination from it."

It was still early in the afternoon, and He might have stayed in the Temple till it shut at sunset, then a few minutes after six in the evening. But these were almost the last words He was to speak as a public teacher. His mission to His nation was ended. There remained only a brief interval of communion with the loved ones round Him, and, then, would come the consummation of Calvary. His work was over, except the final and greatest act of all. Casting a last sad look of quenchless pity on all, He turned away to Bethany, to seek seclusion, till the time came for His self-sacrifice.

It must have been a solemn and well-nigh overpowering moment, thus to bid farewell, for ever, to the Temple of His nation,—the centre of the old kingdom of God;—for the retrospect of His public life, and the vision of the future, must have risen, like a dream, before Him. So far as apparent results went, He had had little success, for, though even His bitterest enemies were forced to own His supernatural power, and the greatness and number of the instances in which it had been shown; though they had seen His grand self-restraint which always exerted it for others, and habitually ignored any personal end, either of ambition, defence, or retaliation, till they had come to treat Him, not only with disrespect, but even with open violence; secure, in His infinite patience and humility; their prejudices had utterly blinded them, and they steadfastly refused, as a class, to accept, in His person, a Messiah so contrary to their gross and ambitious expectations. There were, indeed, even among the chief rulers and priests, many who believed in Him, but it was only a secret conviction which they had not the courage to own.

The threat of excommunication had been too terrible to brave, and

they preferred to cling to their social and civil interests, at the cost of repressing their better thoughts.

Once more, only, was the pleading voice raised. A number of those near apparently followed Him as He retired, and He could not tear Himself from them, without a final outburst of yearning desire for their salvation. Turning round, and raising His voice till the sound rang far and wide, He cried—

"Think not that the faith I demand in myself in any way lessens or takes from the faith that is due to God. To believe in me, and to believe in God, are the same thing. He who has that faith in me, which the proofs I have given of my being sent from God demand, believes not so much in me as in Him who sent me. And thus, also, he who looks on me as that which I have shown myself to be, looks not so much on me as on Him who sent me—on the Godhead of my Father revealed in me. In Me ye have a Light. I came into the world to enlighten men, that every one who yields himself to my guidance, may be as when one walks after a light, and may no longer remain in the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and sin.

"Yet if any one who hears my words, refuses to believe in Me—let him not think that *I* shall inflict judgment on him for his refusal. The end of my coming is not to judge the world, but, rather, to save it from eternal ruin. He who rejects Me, My words, and My deeds, has in his own breast a judge that will condemn him hereafter. The truth I have spoken, in the name of God, which he has refused to receive, will condemn him in his own conscience at the last day, and will condemn him also from the lips of the Great Judge. For the words I have spoken have been no mere utterances of my own; I have taught only that which I was commissioned by my Father to speak, and I know that my teaching, if obeyed and followed, secures everlasting life to men. All that I say is only what my Father has told me to speak in His name. Therefore, let no man think that I speak anything but that which my Father has given me to proclaim. I am He whom God hath sent, and my words are the words of God."

Nothing in these last discourses of Jesus had seemed more strange and inexplicable to the Apostles, than His prediction of the early destruction of Jerusalem, and of the Temple itself. As they now passed with Him, through the forecourts, to the outer gate, and down the eastern steps, to the Kedron Valley; overpowered by the vast magnificence, which seemed grand enough even for the times of the Messiah, they could not refrain from speaking to Him respecting His strange and mysterious words.

"Master," said they, "see what a wondrous structure this is. What stones! what buildings! what splendour! what wealth! How the whole Temple rises, terrace above terrace, from the great white walls, to the Holy Place, shining with gold! and it is not finished even yet!"

The Temple, says Josephus, was built of white stones of great size

—the length of each about thirty-seven and a half feet, some even forty-five feet,—the thickness twelve feet, and the breadth eighteen.

But Jesus looked at all this strength, wealth, and magnificence, with very different eyes. To Him the Jewish theocracy had outlived its day, and had sunk into moral decrepitude and approaching death, which the mere outward splendour of its Temple could not hide. Israel, in rejecting Him, the Voice of God, calling it to rise to new spiritual life, had shown itself ripe for divine judgment. His own death, already determined by the ecclesiastical authorities, and now close at hand, would seal the fate of the nation and its religion. It would be the proclamation of the passing away of the Kingdom of God on earth from Judaism, now dead in forms and rites, to the heathen nations willing to receive its spirit and liberty.

He knew that the Theocrary would cling to their dream of nattonal independence, and the erection of a mighty political empire of the Messiah, and that this involved a struggle between them and Rome, in which their petty weakness must inevitably be crushed. Strange fate! the moment when they fancied they had secured themselves even from reform, by the resolution to put Jesus to death, was that in which He whose death was to ensure permanence and prosperity, predicted their utter destruction!

"Yes," said Jesus in utter sadness, "I see all: they are very great buildings, but I tell you solemnly, the day will come when there will not be one stone of them all left on another, not thrown down."

He said nothing more, but went out of the city by the blossoming Kedron Valley, with its gardens and stately mansions, a picture of peace and prosperity, to the Mount of Olives. Sitting down on a knoll, to enjoy the magnificent view, so full of unutterable thoughts to the Rejected One, the Apostles had Moriah once more before them in its whole glory, crowned by the marble Temple, like a mountain with snow.

In the group around, Peter and James, and John and Andrew, sat nearest their Master, and, as they looked at all the splendour before them—splendour so great that it was often said that he who had not seen it had missed one of the wonders of the world—their thoughts still ran on the words in which He had doomed it to destruction. They had heard Him say that the nation would not see Him again, till they showed themselves ready to receive Him as the Messiah, and that, in the meantime, the city and Temple should be utterly destroyed. Their only idea of the Messiah, even yet, however, was that of a deliverer of the nation, who, besides any spiritual benefits He might confer, would raise Israel to world-wide supremacy. They could not imagine that the holy city, and its Temple, would perish before the end of the world, and He must surely come sooner than that, to free Israel from subjection and inaugurate its glory. The destruction of the city, therefore, could not, they fancied, be before the destruction of all things. They would fain know what sign, after

this catastrophe, would precede His glorious coming and the final consummation, if it were to be so; that they might recognize His advent when it took place. Their ideas, in truth, were in a hopeless confusion.

"Tell us, Master," said one of the four favoured ones, 'when shall these things, of which Thou hast spoken, take place? And what sign will there be of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

It was impossible to explain fully, to minds so filled with preconceived ideas. Much must happen—His death, resurrection, and departure from the earth, before they could acquire just conceptions of His kingdom. Till then, it was hopeless to remove their prejudices. He, therefore, confined Himself, as usual, to the practical, that He might rouse them to watchfulness over themselves, and remove the illusion that the holiness of Jerusalem would preserve it, and that the Messiah must appear first, to deliver the nation from the hand of the Romans.

He fitly began by warning them against false Messiahs. "Take heed," said He, "that no impostor deceive you, by persuading you that he is the Messiah, come, as you expect, to free the nation, and subdue the world, and to spread the Jewish religion over the earth. Many deceivers will rise, calling themselves the Messiah—sent from God to deliver Israel—and saying that the time of this deliverance has come. They will mislead many. Take care that you go not out after them.

"But, to turn to your question—before the Temple is destroyed, you will hear the terrors of wars near at hand, and the distant tumult of others, and you may think that they will bring the end. But be not alarmed. They are divinely appointed, and this may serve to calm your minds; but the destruction of the city and Temple will not take place so soon. Nor must you think that these wars will herald national deliverance: instead of proclaiming an interference of God for the restoration of Israel, they mark the beginning of His judgments. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, and fearful sights in the heavens, here and there, over the earth. Yet, do not think, from these, that God is about to appear for the Jews, and to send them an earthly Messiah. No; all these are only the first pangs of the coming sorrow. Your Rabbis have told you that such things are signs of the speedy advent of the Messiah, but be not deceived.

"Instead of peace, these things will bring you evil. Once more, be on your guard. I shall soon leave you, and would again warn you of the dangers to you which shall precede the last catastrophe. I have told you often, what perils and heavy trials await you, in your founding and spreading my Kingdom, so different in its spiritual and moral unworldliness, from all others. Before the end comes, men will proceed to violence against you, for my name's sake. Your

countrymen will lay hands on you, accuse you, and bring you before the local authorities; you will be scourged in the synagogues and thrown into dungeons, and even dragged before kings and Roman governors, that you may witness for Me, my Person, and my Work, before them.

"But let me comfort you, in prospect of such trials. Never forget that I will not forsake you when you thus suffer for my sake, and shall, myself, by the Holy Spirit whom I shall send to your aid, give you words and wisdom for your defence, when your are before tribunals. Be not therefore anxious, when such persecutions rise, for, in the hour of your trial, it will not be you who speak, but the Holy Ghost.

"Yet, let me not conceal from you that they will deliver you up to every form of suffering, and even kill you, and that you will be hated not only by your own nation, because you proclaim me as the Messiah, but by all the heathen nations as well. In this world you can look only for tribulation.

"But a greater trial awaits you than mere persecution from without. The strife of creeds will enter even the sacred circle of the family; the father will give evidence before the Courts against his own child, the brother against the brother, the child against its parent, the friend against the friend. The fury of heathen and Jewish fanaticism will feel no pity: the nearest blood will rage against its own, and will deliver them up to the executioner. And even in your own number, many will renounce their faith, under the pressure of persecution and trial, and will even betray and deliver up their fellow-Christians to the magistrate, and will hate those from whom they have thus apostatized, My name will indeed become a symbol of hatred and scorn, against every one who confesses it. Still worse, many false Christian teachers will rise in your own bosom, and will mislead numbers. And all this spiritual corruption will sap the brotherly love and religious zeal of great numbers of my followers, for true Christian life cannot thrive where there is moral decay.

"But he who neither renounces my name, nor lets himself be led astray by false teachers, but remains true and loyal to me, till the evil days are over, will receive everlasting honour at my final coming. Such good and faithful servants need have no fear of losing their reward, for nothing can befall them, to hurt or lessen, in the least, their share in the salvation my eternal Kingdom will bring. As regards that, they are perfectly safe. Not a hair of their head, if I may so speak, will perish, so far as their heavenly hopes are concerned. Their faithfulness will gain for them the eternal life of their souls, even should they die as martyrs here.

"Meanwhile the Gospel of the new Kingdom of God will be preached throughout the whole world, that a testimony respecting me may be given to all nations, however they may hate you. Then, but not till then, shall come the end of this present state of things—

the old will then pass away, and the new begin. The reign of the kingdom of God will begin when Judaism has fallen, and heathenism has heard its doom.

"The full spread of my Kingdom cannot come so long as that which it is to displace still stands in Jerusalem. The Gospel needs new soil, new means, new powers. The old religions are so identified with the old civil and political life of men, with their customs and modes of thought, that my Kingdom can hope to found its peaceful reign only after great and terrible revolutions and disturbances. The way will be opened for it by war, with all its horrors, and by the widespread judgments of God on the world at large.

"When, therefore, ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, it will mark the beginning of the end. When you see the holy place in ruins, and desolation reigning there in its hatefulness, as is spoken of in Daniel, let him who is in Judea flee to the hills of Gilead, where he will be safe; let him who is on the house-top not come down to take away his things from the house, but let him flee along the flat roof, to the town wall, and thus escape; and let him who is working in the field, where he has no outer garment, not come back to his house to get it, but let him flee for his life. But woe to those who are with child in those days, and cannot flee, and to those who have children at the breast, and are kept from escaping by vainly trying to save them also. Pray that your flight be not in the winter, with its rains and storms and swollen torrents, nor on the Sabbath day, when he who still clings to Jewish law will think it unlawful to travel more than two thousand cubits. Whatever hinders your swift flight will, indeed, be cause of regret, for the troubles of those days will be great beyond example.

"There will be great distress in the land, and the fierce wrath will be let loose on this nation. Its sons will fall by the sword, and be led off, to be sold as slaves, over the whole earth, and Jerusalem will be trodden under foot of the heathen, as a captive is by his conqueror, till the times allowed by God to the Gentiles, to carry out thus His avenging wrath, be fulfilled.

"And, indeed, if the number of these evil days had not been shortened, in God's pitying mercy, no flesh would be saved. But for the sake of the chosen ones of the Kingdom of the Messiah, whom God has determined to save from the calamities of these days and preserve alive, they have been shortened.

"But when the Temple has been laid waste, and you have fled for your lives, false Messiahs, and men pretending to be prophets, and to speak in the name of God to the nation in its affliction, will rise, once more, taking advantage of the commotion and anxiety of those days, and will be so much the more dangerous. When men say to you, of any of these, 'The Messiah has appeared here,' or 'He has appeared there,' do not believe it. They will pretend to perform such great signs and wonders, that even the chosen ones of my Kingdom

—my disciples—would be deceived, if it were possible. I have warned you of this already, but press on you once more to take heed to it. If, therefore, any one say to you, 'Behold, the Messiah is in the wilderness,' do not go out with him, for they draw their dupes to the wilderness as a safe place for mustering them. If any say, 'Behold, he is in such and such a house, shut up in his secret chambers,' do not believe it. My visible and final coming, respecting which you ask me, will not be such that men need point to this place, or to that, to see me; it will be like the lightning, which shines with instant splendour through all the sky, and announces itself beyond mistake. For, from east to west, the earth will, in that day, be ripe for the judgments of the Messiah, and, as the eagles gather wherever the carcase is, so the Son of Man, then the minister of divine wrath, will reveal Himself to all who have fallen under His condemnation.

"Then, in a future age—when the time of the Gentiles, of which I have spoken, is fulfilled—when he who has prayed long and unfaintingly, like the importunate widow, shall begin to wonder if ever he will be heard—I do not say whether in the second watch, or in the third, or even in the morning: when the bridegroom has tarried while his attendants wait longingly for him—when the unfaithful servant has encouraged himself by the thought that his lord delays his coming—when the Gospel has been preached to all the Gentiles—and when the king may be expected, at last, from the far country to which he has gone—then, suddenly, like the flood in the days of Noah, or the destruction of Sodom, shall the words of the prophets be verified, and earth and heaven be veiled, and darkened, and tremble, before the great coming of the Son of Man, to judgment. And then shall they see the sign of His coming, respecting which you have asked —the far-shining splendour around Him, like the sun in its strength —when He descends in the clouds of heaven, with power and with great glory. And He shall send forth His angels, from the midst of the unutterable light; and the great trumpet of God, which will wake the dead, shall sound, and the angels will gather together around Him all who are His—chosen of God to be heirs of the heavenly kingdom of the Messiah—from north, and south, and east, and west—over the whole round of the world. And all the nations of the earth who have rejected me shall mourn, when they see me thus come in divine majesty. And when these wondrous signs begin, then lift up your heads, for your eternal redemption from all the afflictions of time, is at hand.

"When, therefore, soon after my departure from you, ye see all these wars, and hear all these rumours of wars of which I have told you, know that I, the Messiah, am near in my first coming, as ye know that the summer is close, when ye see the branches of the fig-tree, and all other trees, swell, and put forth their buds and tender leaves. For it is I who come, unseen, to judge Jerusalem and the Temple, as I shall, in the end, come visibly to judge all mankind.

"Verily I say to you, This generation of living men shall not have passed away, before the beginning of the age of the Messiah, to be ushered in by the fall of Israel, and to be closed by all these signs, has come; when the old world shall have drawn to an end, and my Kingdom—the new age of the world—shall take its place till the consummation of all things. Heaven and earth shall one day pass away, but my words shall not, for all I have told you must happen. All the signs I have predicted, as heralds of my coming to judge Jerusalem and Israel, will assuredly be seen by some of you now round me. And my coming then, will be the revelation of my Kingdom before the world, and of its triumph over its Jewish enemies, for my Kingdom can only, then, truly rise, when the Temple has been destroyed. When *it* shall lie strewn in ruins, and desecrated for ever by heathen soldiery, the world that is will be seen to have passed away. There will be an end of the old priesthood and sacrifice, and the earth will be opened to the victory of my spiritual reign.

"But the exact time of the last period of all, of which I have spoken—the destruction of all things visible—the resurrection of the dead, and my return in glory, to judge the nations, I cannot tell you. Even the angels do not know it, nor oven does the Son: it is known to my Father alone. This uncertainty of the time of my coming will make men secure and careless, as they were in the days of Noah. For they went on, dreading no catastrophe, eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and neither believed nor dreamed that the flood would really happen, till it came, and swept them all away. Like it, my coming will be so sudden, that, of two men in the field, one shall be taken, by the angels sent forth to gather the saints, and the other left—for they will have no time to flee—and, of two slave-girls at the household mill, while they are still grinding, the one shall be taken, in like manner, to be with me, and the other left.

"Take heed to yourselves, and watch, lest at any time, like the people before the flood, you give way to sinful pleasures or indulgences, or be engrossed in the anxieties of life, so as to be careless, and unprepared for my return, and that day come on you, as the flood did on them, unawares. For it will burst on all that dwell on the face of the whole earth, as suddenly and unexpectedly, as the snare flies over the creature caught in its toils.

"Take heed, I repeat, and watch: for ye know not when the hour may strike. It will be like the coming of a man who has taken his journey into a far country, and has left his house in the hands of his servants, and given authority over it to them—to each his own special work—and has commanded the keeper of the gate to watch for his return. Watch, therefore, like faithful, diligent servants, for ye know not the hour when I, the Master of the House, shall come, whether it will be in the evening, or at midnight, or at cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest, if I come suddenly, I find you asleep. And

what I say to you, my apostles, I say to all. Be awake and watchful at all times, that ye may be able to escape all the terrors of my coming, by being found faithful, and thus may be set before me by the holy angels, to enter into my glory, and stand before me, as my servants, in my heavenly kingdom.

"You know how a householder would have acted had he known beforehand at what watch of the night the thief would come, to plunder his goods. He would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken into. Therefore, be ready at all times, for the Son of Man will come, when, perhaps, ye least expect Him.

"Who among you will prove himself a good and faithful servant? He will be like a servant of him of whom I have spoken, who took his journey to a far country—a servant set over the household to give them their food in due season, during his absence; who faithfully did it. Blessed will be that servant, whom his lord, when he returns, shall find so doing! Verily I say to you, he will advance him to a far higher post, for he will set him not only over the food of his household, but over all his substance. And blessed, in like manner, will he be whom I, on my return, will find faithful to the charge committed to him in my kingdom!

"But, if, instead of being faithful, you fail in your duty, you will be like a servant of the same master who should say in his heart, 'My lord delays his coming,' and begin to beat his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, at his master's cost. The lord of that servant will come in a day when he does not look for him, and in an hour when he does not expect him, and will punish him to the uttermost, and make him bear the just fate of a hypocrite. Even so, the hypocrite, in my kingdom, shall be cast out into outer darkness. And, oh! what weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there!

"In that day of my final coming it will be as when, at a marriage, the maidens invited to play and sing in the marriage procession, prepare to go out to meet the bridegroom, to lead him to the house of the bride, where the marriage is to be celebrated. Let me suppose there were ten such maidens,—five wise, five foolish. The five foolish ones took their lamps with them, to help the display, and lighten the path of the bridegroom, but they forgot to take oil with them, besides, to refill the lamps, when they had burned out. But the wise not only took their lamps, but oil in their oil flasks as well. All the ten, thus differently prepared, went forth from the home of the bride, and waited in a house, on the way by which the bridegroom must come, to be ready to go out and escort him, when he passed by.

"But he delayed so long that they all grew heavy, and fell asleep. At last, at midnight, they were suddenly roused; for the people in the streets had heard the loud music and shouts, and had seen the light of the lamps and torches of the procession, afar, and raised the cry at the doors—'The bridegroom is coming, go ye out to meet

him.' Then they all arose, and trimmed each her own lamp, to have it ready. The foolish ones now found that their lamps were going out, because the oil was all burned, and asked the wise ones to give them of theirs. But they answered, 'We cannot possibly do so, for our oil would assuredly not suffice both for ourselves and you; go, rather, to the sellers, and buy for yourselves.'

"While they were away buying it, however, the bridegroom came, and the five who were ready, joined the procession, and went in with the bridegroom to the marriage and the marriage-feast, and the door was shut. After a time, the other five came, and knocked at the gate with anxious entreaty—'Lord, lord, open to us.' But he answered, 'I do not know you. You were not among the other maids of the bride in the procession, and, therefore, you are strangers to me, and as such have nothing to do at my marriage.'

"Learn from this parable that they who patiently watch and wait, doing the duty I have assigned them, till I come, though they know neither the day nor the hour when I shall do so; will have a part in the joys of my heavenly kingdom. All my followers will then be, as it were, my bride, and I their bridegroom; but those who are not faithful and true to the end, will be shut out from the marriage-feast."

The Apostles and the others who followed Jesus had been sitting long in the cool of the evening on the pleasant slope of Olivet, listening to this wondrous discourse, but their Master's stay with them was now nearly over, and He was as loath to end, as they that He should. He still went on, therefore, and, next, repeated to them the parable He had before delivered near Jericho—of the talents lent by the lord to his servants. Its awful close, however, which represents the unprofitable servant as cast into the outer darkness, with its weeping and gnashing of teeth, brought before Him all the terrors of the last judgment, and led Him to close by a picture of that awful day unequalled for sublimity by any other, even of His own utterances.

"The parable of the talents, my beloved," said He, "shows that every one of you must needs make the utmost possible use, for the interests of my kingdom in your own hearts and among men, of all the different gifts entrusted to you by me, for my service, according to your respective abilities. For, at my coming, I shall reckon with you all, and those who have been faithful to me shall receive high rewards in heaven, but those who have left their gifts, however small, unused, will have those gifts taken from them, and they themselves will be thrust out of my kingdom."

He then proceeded—in words such as no mere man could ever dream of using—words which we seem to hear spoken with the light as of other worlds shining from the speaker's eyes, and a transfiguration of His whole appearance to more than human majesty.

"I have told you how I shall return invisibly, to earth, before this

generation shall have passed away, to judge Jerusalem and Israel, when the cup of their iniquity shall be full; and how, also, I shall come again, in spiritual unseen presence, to be with my servants in their warfare with the powers of darkness, till my kingdom passes from victory to victory, through succeeding ages, and the prince of this world be finally cast down from his usurped throne, and the world become the kingdom of God and of me, His Messiah.

"Then shall come that day which I have warned and urged you so earnestly to keep ever in mind—the day when, like the lord who returned from the far country to reckon with his servants—I, the Son of Man, now poor, despised, with none round me but you; rejected by my brethren of Israel, and in a few hours to be nailed on a cross like the meanest slave; will come again as Head of the great kingdom of the Messiah, which will then embrace all nations.

"The Father has committed all judgment in this kingdom, to me, His Son, and has given me all power in it, in heaven and in earth. And at that day I shall come in my glory, as its Prince and Head, amidst the splendours of heaven, and with all the angels of God.

"Then will I sit on the throne of my glory; as kings of the earth when they sit to judge; and all nations shall be gathered together before me, by my ministering angels, and I will separate them, one from another, as you have seen a shepherd separate the white sheep from the black goats, and I will set the sheep on my right hand, but the goats on my left.

"Then, as King, coming in the majesty of my assembled Kingdom, shall I say to them on my right hand—'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the earth—that kingdom which I promised as the inheritance of the meek. For ye have proved that ye have truly believed in my name, by the love towards me and mine, which only true faith can yield. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink: I was a stranger, and ye gave me welcome: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.'

"Then shall the righteous, feeling only their shortcomings, and forgetting their good deeds, think it cannot be as I have said—'When, Lord,' they shall ask me, 'saw we Thee hungry, and gave Thee maintenance; or thirsty, and gave Thee to drink? When saw we Thee a stranger, and gave Thee welcome; or naked, and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison, and came unto Thee?'

"And I, the King, will answer them—'Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it, for my sake, to one of these my brethren, even the least of them; the poor, the lowly, the outcast, the persecuted, the wretched, who believed in me, and are now round my throne—or to one of the least of all my brethren of mankind; for the love ye bore Me, who died for them—ye did it unto me.'

"Then shall I also say to those on my left hand—'Depart from me,

accursed, into the everlasting fire; prepared for the devil and his angels, but now to be shared by you, his servants. For I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat: I was thirsty, and ye did not give me to drink: I was a stranger, and ye would not receive me: naked, and ye did not clothe me: sick, and in prison, and ye did not visit me.'

"Then they will try, vainly, to justify themselves, by pleading innocence. 'Lord,' they will say, 'when did we see Thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to Thee? Lord, we never saw Thee thus, and, therefore, have never refused Thee our service.'

"But I will answer them—'Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, my brethren; whom you had with you and might have helped; ye did it not to me. Had ye truly, and not in name only, believed in me, ye would have shown fruits of your faith, in deeds of love for my sake.'

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal."

CHAPTER LVIII.

FAREWELL TO FRIENDS.

It was the twelfth day of the new moon, now rounding to fulness, when the last words had been spoken in the Temple, and farewell taken of it for ever. Jesus had hitherto lingered in its courts till the gates closed, at sunset, after the evening sacrifice, but His soul this day was filled with immeasurable sadness. Israel would not hear the words which alone could save it, and, by its representatives, had not only rejected and blasphemed Him, but was, even now, plotting His death. He had left the Temple courts, therefore, in the early afternoon, to spend some hours with the little band of followers He was so soon to leave. They had sat on the slope of the Mount of Olives, facing the Temple and the city. He had passed quietly and unheeded through the stream of pilgrims and citizens, and had been resting, during His long discourse, in the privacy of His own circle, beneath one of the fig-trees of Olivet, gazing, with full soul, at all He had left for ever. Had they known it, the high priests and rulers would have seen, in His final abandonment of "His Father's House," a portent more awful than any their superstitious fears were even then noting. For, forty years before the destruction of the Temple, and, therefore, in the very days of our Lord's public life, it had been seen, with unspeakable alarm,—if we may trust the Talmud—that the hindmost lamp of the sacred seven-branched candlestick, in the Holy Place, one night went out; and, that the crimson wool tied to the horns of the scape-goat; which ought to have turned white when the atonement was made, had remained red; and "the lot of the Lord," for the goat to be offered on the Day of Expiation, had come

out on the left hand; and the gates of the Temple, duly shut overnight, had been found open in the morning. A generation later, it was to be told, with pale lips, among the heathen, that when the Temple was near its fall, a more than human voice had been heard from the Holy of Holies, crying "The gods have departed," and that presently, a great sound, as of their issuing forth, had been heard.

But the true hour of Jehovah's leaving it, and that for ever, was when His Son passed that afternoon through its gates, to re-enter them no more.

Rising after He had ended His discourse on the near and distant future, He, who, a breath before, had anticipated the hour when He should come amidst the clouds of Heaven, to judge all nations; attended by all the angels, and robed in the splendours of the Godhead; was once more the calm, lowly Teacher and Friend, climbing the slope with His handful of followers, on the way to the well-loved cottage at Bethany.

As they went, He once more broke to those around Him His approaching fate. "You know," said He, "that after two days is the Passover, and that the Son of Man is appointed, by the eternal counsels of God, to be delivered over to His enemies, to be crucified." It was the second time He had expressly used that word of unspeakable degradation and infamy, to men of His day—The Cross. But though they heard it again, they could not even yet realize so disastrous an eclipse of their cherished dreams.

Meanwhile, His enemies were not idle. It was now Tuesday evening, and nothing alarming had followed the popular demonstration of the preceding Sunday. The multitude, indeed, disappointed by seeing no signs of the national movement they had expected that day to inaugurate, had lost their enthusiasm, and, in many cases, grown even hostile. There was less to fear than the authorities had apprehended. Yet, the crowd was fickle, and thousands of Galilæans, the countrymen of Jesus, were at the feast, which was always so restless a time that the Roman Procurator kept a double garrison in Antonia while it lasted, and himself exchanged the congenial society of Cæsarea for Jerusalem, with its hated bigotry and muffled treason. Even the governor-general of the Province sometimes indeed thought it worth his while to be present. The fiery Galilæans might rise if Jesus were apprehended during the feast-week, and any tumult would be certain to bring severe measures, at the hand of the Romans, on the community at large.

The heads of the priesthood and of the Rabbis, were hence in a difficulty, and met to consult on the wisest course. The acting high priest, Joseph, known among the people as "Caiaphas," "the Oppressor," was the soul of the movement against Jesus—for his memorable words, "Why not this one man die, rather than the nation perish?" had first given definite expression and formal sanction, to the idea of putting Him to death. Throwing all his official

dignity into the plot, he put the upper court of his palace, in the upper city, at the disposal of those engaged in it, and there they and he met, to consult how they might get the Hated One into their power without the knowledge of the people, in order to hand Him over to the Romans for crucifixion, without fear of a rescue. The meeting could not, however, come to any fixed plan, for fear of a popular rising. No more could be done than watch, and take advantage of the course of events.

While murder was thus being discussed in the halls of the primate, peace and sacred friendship reigned in the pleasant home at Bethany. The house of Simon, once a leper, but cured by Jesus; now the abode of Martha, perhaps his widow, perhaps his daughter; of Mary, her sister, and of Lazarus, so strangely brought back from the unseen world—the one man raised from the dead of whose second earthly life we know any incident—was a scene of tender respect and loving homage. To do Jesus honour, the family had made a supper for Him, with invited guests, and Lazarus reclined with Him on the table-couch. The company consisted, doubtless, as in the case of the little household itself, of such as owed their health, perhaps their life, or that of some friend, to the Great Healer, and of His immediate followers.

It was, in itself, a tender proof of reverent love, that, at such a time, when the life of their guest was sought by the Authorities of the Temple and Schools, and every one was required, on pain of high displeasure, to help them to arrest Him, He should have been thus honoured; for Bethany was close to Jerusalem, and the act might have brought disaster on a household, known, like that of Martha and Mary, to the dominant class. But a still higher tribute was paid Him; touching and delicate, beyond expression, under the circumstances. The sisters had often pondered how they could show their gratitude for all He had been, and all that He had done for them. He had healed Simon, and had given not only him, but the sisters and their brother, the hope of Heaven, by winning their souls to Himself, and, but now, He had shown how truly He was the Messiah, by bringing back Lazarus from the grave. They knew that the shadows of death were gathering over their Mighty Benefactor Himself, for the disciples, doubtless, repeated to them the depressing intimations He had given them. Mary was left to give their love and gratitude expression.

It was common to anoint the heads of the Rabbis who attended marriage feasts, with fragrant oil, and special guests were sometimes similarly honoured. Jesus Himself, at an earlier date, had had even His feet anointed by a grateful penitent, who had, besides, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, flowing loose, in self-forgetfulness. But now, Mary outdid all former honour paid Him. The costliest anointing oil of antiquity was the pure spikenard, drawn from an Indian plant, and exposed in flasks of alabaster

for sale throughout the Roman Empire, where it fetched a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy.

Of this Mary had bought a flask, containing about twelve ounces weight, and now, coming behind the guests as they reclined, opened the seal, and poured some of the perfume, first on the head and then on the feet of Jesus, drying them, presently, with the hair of her head, like her predecessor. She had rendered a tribute than which she could have given no higher to a King; but it was a worthy symbol of the rightful devotion of all we have and are, to Christ, and, as such, was lovingly accepted by Him. The act, however, raised different thoughts in some of the narrow minds around. As the fragrant odours filled the room, voices were heard muttering that such lavish expense for such an object was wrong. "This ointment," said one, "should have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor. That would have been a worthy act; but this!" It was Judas Iscariot.

With that perfect gentleness and repose which He always showed in such circumstances, the answer of Jesus showed no resentment, to hurt the feelings of any, but yet must have carried joy to the tender heart that had felt her highest offering too little to bestow on such a guest.

"Why do you blame and trouble her?" said He to the company, especially to Judas. "Let her alone. It is a good deed she has done in my honour. You have the poor with you always, and you can never want an opportunity of showing kindness to them, if you wish. But you have not me always with you. Mary, as if she knew I was soon to die, has chosen the strongest way she could of showing how much she loved me. She has done for me, as her Teacher, Messiah, and Friend, while I still live, what she would soon have had to do to my dead body—she has embalmed me for the grave. What remains will do for the day of my burial. I tell you, wherever the gospel shall be preached in the whole world, what she has done will also be told for a memorial of her."

Judas, the only southern Jew among the Twelve—the only man brought up, as it were, under the shadow of the Temple—must have listened to such praise of an act so hateful to him with the bitterest feelings. He had been with Jesus at least from the first appointment of the Apostles, and must, even then, have been conspicuous as a disciple. The good seed of Christ's words had sprung up in those early days in his heart, as in those of the others; but the evil, also, small and unnoticed, perhaps, at first, had been let spring up erelong, and it had grown to rank strength that slowly choked all else. Like all his brethren, he had cherished gross and selfish views of the prospects to be opened for them by their Master. If some of them were to be the high officials in the expected World-Monarchy, he had trusted to get, at least, some post; profitable, if less splendid. Indeed, the lowest dignity promised inconceivable honour,

for were not all the Twelve to sit on thrones to judge the Twelve Tribes of Israel? In the minds of the others, the dream was loyally subordinated to love and duty to the Master: in his, self seized and held, abidingly, the first place. The mildew of his soul had spread apace. Trusted with the common purse of the brotherhood, into which passed the gifts of friends, to meet the humble expenses of each day, the honour, sought at first, perhaps in all uprightness, became a fatal snare. His religion withered apace. Once a disciple from honest anxiety, he continued one, in outward form, as an adventurer. Gain became a passion with him, till, under the very eyes of his Master, he embezzled, as treasurer, the petty funds in his hands.

The entry to Jerusalem had kindled his hopes, after many chagrins and disappointments, for the popular excitement promised to force on Jesus the part of a National Messiah. But, blind, as he must have thought Him, to His own interest, He had made no use of the splendid opportunity. Instead of allying Himself with the dignitaries of Judaism, and inaugurating a mighty Jewish uprising, with high priests and chief Rabbis as His supporters, He had assailed both Temple and School, and proceeded to open rupture with them. Instead of a crown, He had spoken of a cross: instead of honours for His followers, He had foretold persecutions and martyrdom. To the mean and sordid heart of Judas, the bounty of Mary had sufficed to kindle smouldering resentment and disloyalty to a flame. If ruin were certain, he would profit, if he could, before all was over. If Jesus must fall into the hands of His enemies, he might as well get money by what was unavoidable. Had not He, argued the diseased spirit, disappointed him: led him about, for years, in hopes of gain in the end: and had He not, now, told him that the only inheritance he could expect was poverty and suffering? He would go to the high priests, and see what could be done.

Stealing out, therefore, with guilty thoughts, from the quiet cottage, perhaps when they and Bethany had sunk in sleep:—unmoved by the divine love and purity of his Master; forgetful, in the blindness of his evil excitement, of all he had seen and heard, through the last three eventful years, he made his way, in the darkness of night, to the Temple. The watch was at its post at the gates, and on its rounds, but Judas found means to reveal his object to the captain in charge, and was admitted. The officers hastily gathered round to learn why the stranger thus disturbed the night. "I come to betray Jesus of Nazareth," muttered Judas. "He had better be taken to the chief priests," replied those round. Some of the council were hastily summoned forthwith, and received his overtures with a joy that brightened their faces, even by the dull light of the night-lamps,—for it was clear that a cause so righteous as that of the Galilæan, could never give them open and honest grounds for His arrest. Treason must come to their aid, from within. So they bargained with him; meanly enough, indeed; for they offered for his villany, if successful,

only thirty shekels of the Sanctuary,—the price of a slave. But the covetousness of an Oriental was fascinated even by so paltry a bribe. He sold himself as their tool, and from that time sought a good opportunity to betray Jesus, when the people were not round Him.

The next day, our Thursday, was the fourteenth of Nisan—the day on which all labour ceased. All leaven had been removed from every house before noon, in preparation for the Passover in the evening. Towards sunset, the Passover lamb was killed in the forecourts of the Temple, by any one chosen to do so, and the blood and fat burned on the altar as an offering to God. The rest supplied the materials for the feast, an hour or two later, after the beginning of the fifteenth day, at sunset. The fourteenth was, therefore, very busy for the whole of Jerusalem; for both it, the villages round it, and the open country, were filled with countless thousands, all intent on the same observances.

The Passover had been founded to commemorate the departure from Egypt, but its time permitted the union with it of the feast of first-fruits, to celebrate the opening harvest, and it was also called, from rites connected with it, the feast of unleavened bread.

We are not told how Jesus spent Wednesday, for the supper in the home at Bethany was on Tuesday evening. He apparently stayed in privacy, awaiting the coming day.

On Thursday morning the disciples, taking it for granted that He would celebrate the feast with them, came to Him early to receive instructions. Would He keep it, as He legally might, in Bethany, for the village was counted by the Rabbis part of Jerusalem, for religious usages; and the lamb might be eaten in Bethany, though it must be killed at the Temple. It had already been bought on the tenth Nisan, according to the rule of the Law, for though the strict enforcement of this command was not maintained, Jesus was careful to fulfil all the innocent duties prescribed.

No doubt the disciples expected that Bethany would be chosen, for He had solemnly turned away from Jerusalem, two days before, and to go thither again would be to put Himself in the power of His enemies. But He had resolved to visit the city so dear to Him once more. It was the place appointed by the Law for the feast, and He would there be in the midst of the rejoicing multitudes, as Himself a son of Israel. He wished, also, to throw a greater sacredness over the institution He designed to inaugurate that night, as the equivalent in the New Kingdom of God, of the Passover in the Old. It was well to link it in the minds of the Apostles with the sacredness of the Temple, under whose shadow; the City of the Great King, in whose bounds; and the gathering of Israel, in whose midst, it was founded.

Turning, therefore, to Peter and John, His usual messengers, He told them to go and prepare the Passover, that He and the Twelve might eat it together. "On entering the city," said He, "you will meet a man bearing an earthen jar of water; follow him into the

house he enters, ask for the master, and say, 'THE TEACHER told us to ask you "Where is the room intended for me, in which to eat the Passover with my disciples?"' And he will himself show you his guest-chamber, on the upper floor, provided with couches, ready for us. Get the supper prepared for us there."

The two started at once, and found everything as Jesus had said, and by evening all was in readiness to receive Him and the Ten. Who it was that thus entertained Him is not told us. It may have been John Mark, or, perhaps, Joseph of Arimathea, the early scholar, and the friend after death. The Gospels do not say, and even tradition is silent. Universal hospitality prevailed in this matter, and the only recompense that could be given was the skin of the paschal lamb, and the earthen dishes used at the meal. Not fewer than ten, but often as many as twenty—enough, in any case, to consume the entire lamb—could sit down together, but Jesus wished to have none but His closest circle with Him, that He might bid them a final, tender farewell. Women were not commonly present, and, indeed, were excluded by many; but, apart from this, the evening was designed as a time of deepest communion with the trusted Twelve alone, and, hence, neither the outer circle of disciples, nor the ministering women who had lovingly followed Him from Galilee, were invited.

Peter and John had had much to do beforehand. It may be, the lamb was yet to be bought, that morning, for its purchase on the tenth had fallen rather out of use. They had to choose, from the countless pens in which the victims were offered for sale, a male lamb, of a year old, without blemish of any kind. In Galilee, no secular work was done all day, but, at Jerusalem, it ceased only at noon. About two, the blast of horns announced that the priests and Levites in the Temple were ready, and the gates of the inner courts were opened, that all might bring their lambs for examination, and might satisfy the priests as to the number intending to consume each. Forthwith, the long lines of household fathers, servants, disciples of the Rabbis, and, among the rest, the two deputed by Jesus, pressed across the court of the men, which was gaily tapestried and adorned, to the gate of the priests' court; the lamb on their shoulders, with a knife stuck in the wool, or tied to the horn.

About half-past two, the evening offering was killed, and about an hour after, it was laid on the great altar. Forthwith, three blasts of the trumpets of the priests, and the choral singing of the great Hallel by the Levites, gave the signal for the slaughter of the Passover lambs, which had to be finished between the hours of three and five. As many offerers were admitted as the courts would hold, and then the gates were shut. Heads of families, or servants deputed by them, killed the lambs, and the priests, in two long rows, with great silver and gold vessels of curious shape, caught the blood, and passed it to others behind, till it reached the altar, at the foot of which it was

poured out. The victims, hung on the iron hooks of the walls and pillars of the courts, or on a stick between the shoulders of two men, were then skinned, and cut open; the tail, the fat, the kidneys, and liver, set apart for the altar; the rest wrapped in the skin, and carried home from the Temple, towards evening. As the new day opened, at sunset, the carcass was trussed for roasting, with two skewers of pomegranate wood, so that they formed a cross in the lamb. It was then put in an earthen oven of a special kind, resting, without bottom, on the ground, and was roasted in the earth. The feast could begin immediately after the setting of the sun, and the appearing of the stars, on the opening of the fifteenth of Nisan, which was proclaimed by new trumpet blasts from the Temple.

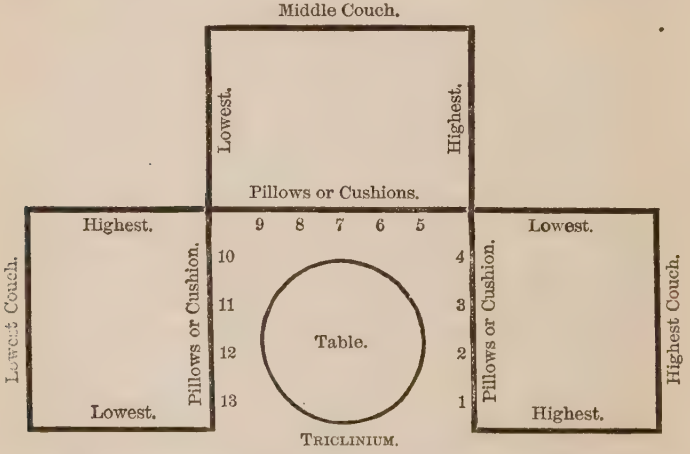
Judas had stolen back to Bethany before daylight, that his absence might not be missed, and, after another day's bitter hypocrisy, under the burning eyes of his Master, followed Him, with the other Apostles, to Jerusalem, in the evening. They must have breathed heavily in the troubled air, for presentiments of unknown dangers filled every heart. They still clung to their old dream of a visible earthly kingdom of God, under their Master, but their spirits must have sunk within them as they passed through the vast multitudes, wholly absorbed in the approaching feast, with no sign of preparation for a national Messianic movement; and along the illuminated streets, in which no one took notice of them. That the hierarchy had denounced Jesus, was, itself, enough to fill their simple minds with dismay, for its splendour and power seemed reflected in the millions assembled from the whole world, to honour the faith and the Temple, of which they were the public representatives. And was not the tiara worn by a fierce Sadducee? were not the governing families exclusively of this cruel and inhuman party? As they passed under the shadow of the Temple, with its gleaming lights, its marble bastions, and its immemorial traditions, they must have felt, that, unless Jesus chose at last to do what He had never yet done, even for a moment—unless He used His supernatural power in self-defence, and for self-aggrandisement, they were hopelessly lost.

To Jesus Himself the moment was unspeakably solemn. His scarcely founded Kingdom was about to pass through the severest trial. The temporary and earthly in it were to be violently separated, for ever, from the heavenly and eternal. All hopes of a worldly kingdom, so deeply rooted in the minds of His followers, were to be destroyed, and He, the visible head of the Kingdom, to be apprehended, dishonoured, and crucified. The thoughts of His disciples were to be raised from the idea of a present, incarnate Messiah, to a Messiah in heaven; to appear, henceforth, no more, but by His return from the invisible world. To be true to Him, meant, from this time, the realization of a spiritual conception as yet unattained by even the most enlightened of the Twelve.

But Christ was in no degree turned aside, or paralyzed in His resolution, by such dangers. While in no sense courting death, and even wishful, if it pleased His Father, to escape its attendant horrors, He moved towards the appointed and foreseen end, with sublime self-possession, and holy peace of soul, recognizing all that yet remained for Him to do, and doing it with a divine serenity. His bearing to the great world, to the last; His action and His self-restraint, are, alike, wonderful; but it must strike us still more, as we observe it closely, how He bore Himself in the circle of His chosen ones as the catastrophe pressed nearer and nearer.

When the Twelve, with their Master, had entered the room, to take their places on the cushions, for the meal, the greatness of the change yet to be wrought on their minds was once more strikingly shown. In spite of all He had said, the question of precedence was uppermost in their thoughts.

As the head of the group, Jesus naturally took the first place on the highest couch—the outermost, on the right of the hollow square; —His face towards the second place; His feet outwards. Resting



His left elbow and side on a cushion the whole breadth of the couch, His right hand was thus free, while the Apostle next Him reclined so that his head lay, as it were, in his Master's bosom. It had been the custom, in ancient times, to eat the Passover standing, but the Rabbis had changed it for the Gentile practice of reclining. It was like slaves, they said, to eat standing, and as Israel was not a race of

slaves but of free men, they should eat the feast reclining; a flattery so pleasing to Jewish pride that even the poorest adopted the new mode.

But this Jewish pride in the Apostles, made still more fierce by selfish ambition, in prospect of the political glory they still perversely hoped for, could ill brook to take a lower place than others. It was a grave matter for them, as for the Pharisees, who should have the higher seats, for, in their delusion, they assumed that it might affect their future position in the Messianic State, to be founded, as they dreamed, presently. So the strife that had broken out on the other side of Jericho, once more distressed their Master, and He could only still it by repeating the keen rebuke He then gave them. "In my kingdom," said He, "to be humble is to be great: the lowliest is, in it, the highest." No more was needed; the struggle, now, would rather be for the lowest place.

But He did not confine Himself to words. Rising from the couch, when the supper was just about to begin, and girding Himself with a towel, like a slave, after laying aside His upper garments, He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples. Pride and selfish ambition could not be more strikingly and touchingly reproved, than by such an act on the part of one who knew that He had had all things given into His hands by God His Father, and that He had come forth from Him, and was about to return to Him. No greater proof could be shown of His love, than that such an act of humility should be its natural expression. Had they all been true-hearted, it would have been amazing in one so transcendently above them, but it was still more so, when He knew that one of them was already a traitor. He had proclaimed Himself the Son of God, the future judge of the world, the Messiah in whose gift were the honours of heaven, and whose voice was to raise the dead, and they were simple Galilæan fishermen. There could be no commentary on His demand for lowliness, as the true ground of advancement in His kingdom, more vivid than His voluntarily performing the lowliest act of personal service to them all.

He seems to have begun with Simon Peter, His chief Apostle, but the warm heart and the impulsive nature of the rock-like man shrank from letting his Master humble Himself thus. "Lord," said he, "dost *Thou* wash *my* feet!" He had not realized the meaning of an act intended as symbolical. "What I do," replied Jesus, "thou understandest not now, but wilt know hereafter." "*Thou* shalt never wash *my* feet, Lord," reiterated the Apostle. "If I do not wash thee," said Jesus, "thou hast no part with me." "Lord, if that be the case," broke out Peter, "wash not my feet only, but my hands and my head." "It is not necessary," said Jesus. "He who, according to Jewish ways, has taken a bath before his meal, needs no more than to cleanse the dust from his feet, which has clung to them on the way from the bath. Except this, he is clean, and it is the

same with you, except him who intends to betray me. By my word, which I have spoken to you, and the faith waked in you by it, you are already clean in the sense I mean—right in the desire of your heart towards me. Yet, though thus clean, the dust of earth still clings to you in part, and makes a last washing needful." The hour was at hand for this last crowning act of love—the shedding His blood for them for the remission of their sins—and He would now prepare them for it by this tender symbol, for it taught not only humility, but that He alone could take away sin.

Having washed their feet and resumed His garments, He once more took His place on the couch.

"Do you know," He asked, as He did so, "the meaning of what I have now done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for I am both. Learn, then, that, if I, your Master and Lord, wash your feet, you, also, ought to wash one another's feet, for I have done this as an example to you, that you should do to each other as I have done to you. You know, and I would have you remember it, that a servant is not greater than his lord, nor an apostle than He who sent him forth, so that you may well imitate me, your superior, in my humility. If you understand what I say, it will be well for you if you act on my teaching. I do not, indeed, speak of you all. I know your characters and hearts, but all has happened in fulfilment of the divine will, for the Scripture must needs be fulfilled, which says, 'He that eats bread with me, craftily lifts up his heel against me;' to trip and overthrow me. I tell you before it happen, that, when it does take place, you may believe that I am indeed the Messiah, and that no other is to be expected. That I should be betrayed by one of ourselves might have shaken your faith in me, but it cannot do so when I have foreseen and foretold it, as part of the counsel of God. But to cheer and encourage you in your faithfulness, let me tell you that you may go forth to the mission on which I have sent you, with joyful hearts. Your high position, as my apostles, remains unaffected by the treachery of one of your number. For, as I have said before, I now solemnly repeat—he who receives you is accounted by me as if he had received myself, and he who receives me receives God the Father who sent me, for He dwells in me, and I in Him."

The supper now began, but the spirit of Jesus was still clouded and troubled by the presence of the traitor. At last His feelings broke out into irrepressible words. "Verily, verily," said He, "One of you, who eat with me, will betray me. His hand is with me on the table." They had never hitherto realized His hints, and the very thought of treason, to their honest and faithful hearts, was almost beyond belief. They could not think who was meant, for Judas had managed, by his hypocrisy, to hide his character from them all. One by one, they began to ask, "Lord, is it I?" "It is one," replied Jesus, "who dips with me into the dish. The Son of Man, indeed, goes in this way by the counsels of God, from this world, but woe to that man by whom

He is betrayed! It would have been well for him if he had not been born!" Words thus general only increased the pain and emotion of all. At last, Peter, not venturing to ask directly who it could be, but conscious of his own integrity, beckoned to John, who lay next our Lord, to ask Him who could be so base. "It is he," whispered Jesus, "who is just about to dip the bitter herbs into this charoseth with me, and to whom I shall give some of it presently."

He then dipped the piece of bread into the charoseth, and handed it to Judas. "Is it I?" asked the guilty man, conscience-stricken, and yet unmelted. He had not heard the words of John, but his guilty soul could not help stammering out the question, in a vain attempt to keep up the mockery of true-heartedness he had acted so long. The awful reply—that "it was"—tore away the mask at once, and unveiled his heart. That all was known would have overwhelmed some, in shame and contrition, but it only hardened the betrayer. The wild madness of evil was on him for the time. He could think only of himself: his fancied wrongs; his full resolve. Satan had entered his soul, and bent his whole nature to his own dark ends. It may be that the exposure roused him to the heedlessness of despair, as when the arch enemy bade hope farewell,

> "and, with hope, farewell fear,
> Farewell remorse: all good to me is lost;
> Evil, be thou my good!"

It was vain for him to seek to hide the workings of his soul by an affected outward calm. He had long veiled falsehood

> "under saintly show,
> Deep malice to conceal, couch'd with revenge."

But the eyes of his Master shone into the depths of his being, and saw the tumult of his worst passions, in their mastery. "What you have to do," said Jesus, "do quickly." He could not breathe freely till the miserable man had left, and besides, He would fain meet the inevitable as soon as might be, for the slow advance of a catastrophe is harder to bear than the catastrophe itself. Judas knew the meaning of the command at once, and, having received the piece of bread, dipped in the charoseth, moodily took it, and silently withdrew into the outer night. The Eleven were too much confused to realize the end as at all so near. Betrayal might come, but at some future, perhaps distant, time. They only fancied, therefore, that Judas had left either to buy what might be needed during the week of the feast, or for that special night; or that Jesus had bethought Himself of some deed of mercy to the poor, and sent him to carry it out. The traitor gone, Christ felt free to speak, and, as if relieved of a load, broke out into a joyful anticipation of His fast-coming triumph. In the near vision of the Cross, His work seemed already finished; His glory, as conqueror of Death and Hell, and Redeemer of Mankind, attained, and that of God the Father illustrated.

"Now," said He, in effect, "the Son of Man is already glorified. All things are hastening to His triumph, and, in that triumph, God Himself will also be glorified, for it is His work which I shall presently complete. And, if God be thus glorified in my death for the salvation of man, He will assuredly crown me with His own heavenly glory, when I return to Him: the glory that I had with Him, before I came to earth to become man, and that, even now, is close at hand, through my death, which will usher me into it. The betrayer has gone to accomplish it!

"My children, for I call you so in love, I shall be only a little while longer with you, and you will feel the want of my presence, and wish for me; but, as I once said to my enemies, I shall be where you cannot follow and find me. For a parting word, let me give you a last command,—my very last: a new command, to be kept, as such, so much the more;—that, henceforth, ye love each other because I have loved you all, and because you all love me. I have often, before, told you to love all men, and so be like God, but I now tell you to do so, for the love I bear to you, and for that which you bear to me. You must, henceforth, be known as members of my kingdom, by the love you show to each other, as such. And the love you have, as brethren, must be such, and as great, as mine has been towards you all."

As He thus spoke, Peter still dwelt, in his thoughts, on the sad words which seemed to foreshadow a lasting separation between him and his Master. "Lord," said he, in his bold, impetuous way, "You speak of going away; pray tell us whither you are going? Will you leave us and go to the Gentiles?" "I go to a place," replied Jesus, "where you cannot follow me at present, however willing you may be to do so. Yet, do not fear. We shall not be separated for ever. You will, one day, follow me, in the same way, and then you will come to me." Peter's heart could not be silent. "I shall be glad to come to Thee, Lord," said he, "even after a time, but why can I not go with Thee now? Thou knowest me. I am ready to lay down my life for Thee."

"Do you think so?" replied Jesus, with a look full of friendship, and yet also of earnest sadness. "You little know your own heart. All of you will forsake me, and leave me to my enemies this very night, as Zechariah, the prophet, has foretold—'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered abroad.' But be not cast down with too much sorrow. After I have risen from the dead, I will go into Galilee, and gather you round me once more." The idea of forsaking his Master, whom he loved so dearly, was too inconceivable, however, to Peter, in the self-confidence of his affection, to allow him to accept it as possible. "Other men may, perhaps, be offended on account of Thee, Lord," said he, "but if all the world were to be so, there is no fear of my failing. I, at any rate, will never leave Thee."

"Simon, Simon," replied Jesus, using the old name by which He

had know him long ago—"take care. Self-confidence will be your undoing. Satan has seen it, and has sought to get God to give you over into his power, as he once did Job, and he has got you for the time, to sift you as wheat is sifted. He would fain have it that your professions are only chaff, and he will shake and test you by temptations, dangers, and troubles, to try to make you turn against me, and thus prove that it is so. But I am mightier than your enemy, and I have prayed for you that, though you fall, you may rise again, and that your faith in me may not give way altogether, and separate you entirely from me. Though you will assuredly fall, yet you will repent, and when you have done so, see that you strengthen the faith of your fellow-disciples, and become their helper, to support and confirm them, if they, like you, waver."

Peter was sorely distressed at such words. Conscious of his honest love and fidelity, it seemed as if Jesus doubted both. His warm Galilæan heart was full. He felt as if his Master spoke of his acting in a way of which he could not believe himself capable. "Lord," said he, "I care not what happens to Thee. I am ready to go with Thee to prison, or to die with Thee, but I will never leave Thee, nor be untrue to Thee." "Do you think so, Peter?" replied Jesus, with a voice full of tenderness—"I tell you that this very night, before the cock crow the second time, you will thrice deny that you know me." "If I were to die for it," answered the Apostle, "no one will ever hear me deny Thee." "I can say the same," added all the other Apostles.

There was now a pause for a short time in the conversation. Presently Jesus re-commenced it. "You may wonder at my speaking as I have done to-night," said He, "but there are good grounds for it. Your circumstances will be entirely different, henceforth, from what they have been in the past. A time of care and struggle lies before you. When I sent you to travel through the country, preaching the Kingdom, and you had neither purse, nor bag for food, nor sandals, —did you miss any of these, or want for anything?" "Nothing, Lord," said all the Eleven. "It will be very different now," replied Jesus. "Whoever has money, let him take it, and let him take provisions for the way, as well; and let him that has no sword sell his coat to buy one, to defend himself. He who has money and provisions can help himself on by them in his journeys, but he who has none will need to ask hospitality, and, as he needs not hope to receive it, let him, at least, have the means of protection. I speak in a figure, for I do not really mean you to fight, or to carry or use a sword, but I wish to impress on you how hostile the world will, henceforth, be to you, as you go on your journeys as my apostles; and what earnest energy and struggle will be needful, on your part, while you are thus carrying the news of the Kingdom through the world. For I tell you, solemnly, that the words of Isaiah, 'And He was reckoned among transgressors,' must be fulfilled in me, for that which has been written of me in Scripture is about to be accomplished."

The disciples, always ready to understand whatever they heard, in the most material sense, had failed to catch the real meaning of Jesus in His reference to the sword. They fancied that He wished them to provide weapons to resist approaching danger. "We have two swords," said one of them. "That will do," replied Jesus, gently avoiding further explanation. "You will not need more than the two,"—a touch of sad irony which sufficed to show even then that He had thought of something very different as their defence than the purchase of arms; for how were the nine, who had no swords at all, to protect themselves, when scattered on the apostolic journeys of which He had spoken?

The evening was now somewhat advanced, according to Eastern notions, but the Passover meal, in its different rites, could not be hurried. The feast began thus, in other circles, though we cannot tell how far the usual customs were followed by Jesus. A cup of red wine, mingled with a fourth part of water, to make it a pleasant and temperate drink, was filled by one of the company, and given to the head of the family, who took it in his right hand, as he rested, supporting himself on his left side and arm, and thanked God in the words—"Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, Thou King of the world, who createdst the fruit of the vine." He then tasted the cup, and passed it round. Thanks for the institution of the washing of hands followed, and then the washing itself, which was merely formal. "Bitter" herbs, such as endives, lettuce, and the like, were next set on the table, to represent the hard life of Egypt. Thanks were given for them also, and then they were passed round and eaten, after dipping them in a mixture of salt and vinegar. The unleavened bread —the bread of affliction—which gave one of its names to the feast, followed next, and then the bowl of charoseth and the Passover lamb. After this, the head of the company once more gave thanks to Him "who created the fruit of the earth," and the bitter herbs were dipped by each in the charoseth, and a piece of it, "the size of an olive," eaten, with them, by all. A second single cup of wine, mingled with water, was now poured out, discourse on the lessons of the feast was held, and then the hundred and thirteenth and hundred and fourteenth Psalms, part of the Hallel, were sung. Another short thanksgiving followed, and the cup was once more passed round and tasted.

The Household Father now washed His hands again, and then took two of the unleavened cakes, broke one in two, and laying the pieces on the unbroken cake, pronounced a thanksgiving—"Blessed be He who makes bread to grow from the earth,"—wrapped some bitter herbs round a piece of the broken bread, dipped it in the charoseth, ate it, after another special thanksgiving, and, with it, a part of the lamb; the others following His example. The supper had only now properly begun. Each ate and drank at his will; all, alike, in the patriarchal way of the East, lifting what they wished, with their fingers, from the common dish. A third cup of wine, passed round, marked the close of the feast as a religious solemnity.

The meal had advanced thus far, and was now virtually finished, when the warning had been given of the approaching denial of their Master by Peter, and the weak-minded desertion of the Eleven. The solemn words, foretelling the dangers and trials before them, had been added, when Jesus, now in the bosom of the little band, nearest and dearest to Him on earth; His companions through the past years, since His public work began—introduced by an act befitting a spiritual religion like His, in its simplicity, the institution which, henceforth, should supersede in His kingdom on earth the feast they had ended. Homage had been paid for the last time, as in farewell, to the Past: they were, hereafter, to honour the new Symbol of the Future.

He was about to leave them, and, as yet, they had no rite, however simple, to form a centre round which they might permanently gather. Some emblem was needed, by which they might, hereafter, be distinguished: some common bond, which should outwardly link them to each other, and to their common Master. The Passover had been the symbol of the theocracy of the past, and had given the people of God an outward, ever-recurring, remembrance of their relations to each other, and their invisible King. As the founder of the New Israel, Jesus would now institute a special rite for its members, in all ages and countries. The Old Covenant of God with the Jew had found its vivid embodiment in the yearly festivity He had that night, for the last time, observed. The New Covenant must, henceforth, have an outward embodiment also; more spiritual, as became it, but equally vivid.

Nothing could have been more touching and beautiful in its simplicity than the symbol now introduced. The Third Cup was known as "the cup of blessing," and had marked the close of the meal, held to do honour to the economy now passing away. The bread had been handed round with the words, "This is the bread of affliction:" and the flesh of the lamb had been distributed with the words, "This is the body of the Passover." The feast of the Ancient People of God having been honoured by these striking utterances,—Jesus took one of the loaves or cakes before Him, gave thanks, broke it, and handed it to the Apostles with words, the repetition, almost exactly, of those they had heard a moment before—"Take, eat; this is my body, which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me." Then, taking the cup, which had been filled for the fourth and last handing round, He gave thanks to God once more, and passed it to the circle, with the words, "Drink ye all of it, for this cup is the New Covenant" presently to be made "in my blood;" instead of the covenant made also in blood, by God, with your fathers: "it is," in abiding symbol, "my blood of the Covenant" of my Father, with the New Israel, "which is shed for you and for many for the remission of sins. This do, as often as ye drink, in remembrance of Me."

For Himself, He declined to taste it. "I will not drink, henceforth," said He, "of the fruit of the vine—for it was still only wine

—till that day, when, at the end of all things, the kingdom of God, which I have founded, shall finally triumph, and my followers be gathered to the great heavenly feast. Then, I shall drink it new, with you and them."

Such, and so simple, was the new rite of the Spiritual Theocracy. To those around Him, at its institution, there could be no doubt of its meaning and nature, for it was, even in words, a counterpart of that which He had superseded, with a purer and more spiritual form. The cup, He told them, was a symbol of the New Covenant, under which, as His followers, they had come; in distinction from that which they had left, for His sake. It was to be a memorial of Him, and a constant recognition of their faith in the virtue of His atoning death—that death, whose shed blood was the seal of this New Covenant between the subjects of His kingdom, and God, His Father. It symbolized before all ages, to the New Israel, the cardinal virtue of His death. The Apostles could have had no simpler or more unmistakable intimation that as the blood of the Passover lamb redeemed the people of God, of old, from the sword of the angel of wrath, His blood would be a ransom for man, from far deadlier peril. A covenant, to them, implied a sacrifice, and His blood, as the New Covenant, was, therefore, sacrificial: the blood of a Covenant which pledged His followers to faith, and duty; the blood of a new paschal lamb, with which His disciples must, in figure, be sprinkled, that the destroying angel might pass over them, in the day of judgment. The custom of the nation to make a common meal the special occasion of religious fellowship, made the new institution easy and natural to the Apostles, and the constant use of symbols in their hereditary religion prevented their misconceiving the meaning of those now introduced for the first time. They saw in it an abiding memorial of their Lord: a vivid enforcement of their dependence on the merits of His death, as a sacrifice for their salvation: the need of intimate spiritual communion with Him, as the bread of life: and the bond of the new brotherhood He had established. The joint commemoration of His broken body and shed blood, was, henceforth, to distinguish the assemblies of His followers from the world at large. Excepting baptism, it was the one outward form in the Society, established by their Master.

From a rite thus simple, doctrines have been developed by theological zeal and heated fancy, which would have alike startled and shocked those who first partook of it. It has been forgotten how Jesus, Himself, in answer to the cavil—"How can He give us His flesh to eat?" repudiated the literalism which caught at sound, and missed the sense. "My flesh—my bodily person," said He, "profiteth nothing towards procuring eternal life: to talk of eating it to gain that life is unworthy trifling: it is the Spirit who quickens the soul to a new, immortal, and heavenly existence, and that Spirit acts through the words of sacred truth which I speak to you. *They* are spirit, and they are life."

CHAPTER LIX.

THE FAREWELL.

JERUSALEM was the brightest and happiest of cities on this Passover night. But though the hum of universal rejoicing rose on every side, there was only sadness in the little band round Jesus. One of their number had proved a traitor, and their Master had told them, once more, that He would very soon leave them. They were sore at heart from shame at the baseness of Iscariot; at the dread of losing a Master they passionately loved; and at the utter miscarriage of all their half-worldly, half-religious, expectations of earthly glory. Their Master had instituted a rite to mark them as apart from all other men, but it looked as if there would be little use for it, in the apparently near overthrow of His infant Kingdom.

As they reclined, sad and silent, Jesus read their thoughts, and began to cheer them, by lifting their hearts from the gloomy present to the glorious future.

"Let not your hearts be troubled with care and anxiety in such a way," said He; "believe in God, and in me, His Son, who speak in His name, and let that faith lead you to trust confidently that the promises made you will be fulfilled. I have, indeed, told you that I must go to my Father, but I have told you, also, that I will return. You have, assuredly, nothing to expect on earth except trial, but your reward in the world to come may well raise you above all sorrow on that account. In heaven, my Father's house, are many mansions; you need not fear that everlasting habitations in glory will fail you. If it were not so, I would have told you, for I never deceive you. Nay, more, I am your forerunner thither. If I go away, it is to prepare a place for you. I am your friend, going home before you, to get all ready for your glad reception when you follow me.

"Nor is this all; I will return to fetch you to my heavenly home, that, where I am, you may be, also, for ever. If you remember what I have said in the past, you will know not only whither I am going, but, since it is I who prepare a place for you above, and I, and no other, who will come to lead you thither, you must also know the way."

He alluded to His spiritual return at the blissful death of His servants, to guide them to Himself, above, and He had told them, not long before, that He was the door of the great fold, and that if any man entered by Him, he would be saved. But they had forgotten this, as they had so much else.

A full and satisfying answer to the question of Peter, lay in these words. But it was not enough to still the fears and doubts in the minds of the Apostles. They still clung fondly to their earthly

hopes of the Messiah's Kingdom, and though they, perhaps, realized the near departure of their Master, they had not, even yet, come to comprehend that it meant His death. Hence His figurative language remained so dark to them, that Thomas, constitutionally given, as he was, to seek clearness and certainty, interrupted Him with a reverent freedom—

"Lord, we do not, as yet, know whither Thou art going, and how can we know the way in which to follow Thee?" The questioner wished to find out the way by learning the goal, but Christ, in His answer, pointed him to the way as revealing all else.

"I myself, and no other, am the way," said He, "because no one comes to the Father, in His heavenly glory, but through me. I am the true way, for I speak only the truth given me from above to make known the way to life, for he who believes in me shall live by me, and shall have everlasting life, and I shall raise him up at the last day. If ye have known me—the Way—ye will know whither I am going —to my Father—for, since he who sees the Son, sees the Father also, you know Him from this time, and have seen Him, in seeing me. I am the WAY, because no one can reach my Father's presence, but through faith in me as the Saviour: the Truth, because I am the self-revelation of God; the Light, come into the world, without following which, no one can gain salvation: the Life, because I am the source and spring of eternal life, so that he who does not receive me into his heart, by faith, is already condemned."

Philip had listened, but could not understand. He could only think that Jesus, in speaking of seeing the Father, alluded to some invisible appearance of Jehovah, for the purpose of founding the earthly kingdom of the Messiah. With a child-like simplicity, therefore, he turned to Christ—"Lord, show us the Father, and all our wishes will be satisfied."

No one who had thought over the words "If ye have known me, ye will have known my Father also," and had understood them, could have asked such a question. It marked an amazing want of intelligent appreciation of the teaching of our Lord, and of His mode of speech. Hence, the answer of Christ sounds almost sad. "Have I been so long with you, and do you know so little of me, Philip? If you really knew me, you would not ask me to show you the Father. He cannot be shown to the natural sight. But he who sees me, and rightly understands who I am, knows the Father, in thus knowing me. Such an one realizes that, in me, the highest revelation of God that is possible has appeared, and has no wish to have any higher or other outward and material manifestation of Him. You speak as if you did not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and that hence, as I said, he who sees me sees the Father also. The proof that it is so, is in my words, for they are not my own, but His. If you doubt this, you do not need to believe merely because I say so; believe it on the proof of the works that I do, for it is not I, who do

them, but the Father. Put away your gross earthly ideas. What I mean is, that the Father is revealed by the Son, as His image and likeness, but only in a spiritual sense, to the eye of faith and of the soul."

Jesus now turned to the Apostles at large, and resumed His discourse at the point He had left, when, first Thomas, and then Philip, broke in with their questions.

"I have promised you eternal life," said He, "if you trust me and my Father. Let me do more, that you may be cheered and supported in your future labours for my Kingdom. I tell you, with all solemnity, that if you have this true faith in me, and love towards me, you will have the power to do just such wonderful works as I have done, and even greater, for I am going to My Father to be raised to all power in heaven and earth; so that you may feel sure that your prayers, as my Apostles, offered in my name, for the advancement of my Kingdom, will be heard and answered, in all their fulness. You will receive power from above to overcome the world by your labours as my Apostles;—to spread the Gospel among all nations, and to triumph over all Jewish and Gentile opposition. I mean this when I speak of your doing greater works than my outward miracles on one here and one there. It is I who will give you this power, for I am in my Father, and my Father is in me, and He works through me, and I shall give it that my Father may be glorified by my triumph; for His glory is the great end of my work, now and hereafter. So mighty, indeed, will be your prayers in my name, as my Apostles, that I will do not only what you ask, for the spread of my Kingdom, but I will do it whenever, and as often as ever, you ask it.

"But if you desire that so great an honour should be granted you, that I should hear and answer all your prayers, you must, above all things, keep my commandments, for by doing so you best show your love for me.

"I know you feel sad at the thought of losing my presence and help, and wonder who will stand by you, and aid you, when I am gone. Be not afraid. I will not leave you alone, but will see that my place be supplied, so that you want for nothing. For I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper and Counsellor, who will not leave you, as I must now do, but will abide with you for ever—protecting, helping, strengthening you, in all your needs; the Spirit of Truth, who imparts the divine Truth to the hearts of men, leads them to know it, and quickens them to all spiritual power. The unbelieving world cannot receive Him, because they have not the inward sight to know Him, and He is not visible to the outward sense. But they cannot comprehend, and will not receive, anything that is not material, and apparent to the bodily eye. You, however, who believe in me, will know Him, for He will remain with you, and will be in you, and your own experience will make you feel that He

"Nor is this all, my dear ones. I will not leave you like orphans; with me, your spiritual Father, gone from you for ever. Not only will you have the Spirit of Truth with you, but I, myself, will shortly return to you. In a very little while longer the world will see me no more, but you will see me, though not bodily present. You will see me in spirit, and feel that I commune with you and work in you, through the Spirit, whom I will send. I shall be alive, though unseen, for I will rise from the dead and live for evermore, and shall make you partakers of my heavenly and deathless life. By this higher spiritual life ye shall know, in that day, when, by the gift of my Spirit, I come to you in power, that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. When I come, finally, in outward glory, as I have told you already, at the last day, you will have no more doubts or fears, as you now have, in this time of my lowliness and humiliation. You will then know, when you see me descend in heavenly majesty, as you shall have already felt when I come, very soon, by the Spirit; that my words are true—that I am indeed in my Father, and you in me, and I in you—that we are for ever inseparably one with the Father, and with each other.

"But only he who has my commandments in his heart, and practises them in his life, truly loves me, and will be loved by my Father and by me. To him will I reveal my presence in his soul, by the Spirit through whom I commune with him."

Here, Judas Thaddæus, "the brave," the son of an unknown James, interrupted the discourse by a reverent question. With the simple literal ideas of his age and nation, he could not understand what Jesus had said about manifesting Himself only to individual believers, and not to all men. He still expected a visible appearance of Christ, in glory, as the Messiah, to judge the unbelieving world, and set up His own Kingdom. "What has happened, Lord," asked he, "to make Thee determine to show Thyself as the Messiah only to us, and not to the world at large? How comes it?"

"The reason," replied Jesus, "is, that the world, so long as it does not believe in me and love me, is neither morally capable of receiving such a manifestation of me, as I mean—a spiritual communion with the soul—nor worthy of it. Only believing and faithful hearts can become, or desire to become, the abode of my Father or of myself, so that We may live in that loving fellowship with them which reveals Us to them. I do not speak of such an outward and visible dwelling with men as when the divine glory rested between the cherubim, or over the Tabernacle; but an unseen abode, by the Holy Spirit, in the soul as in a Temple. Only he who loves me, and, loving me, keeps my commandments, can have this honour and blessedness. Such an one My Father will love as well as I, and we will come to him and make our abode with him. He who does not love me will not keep my commandments. I call my commandments mine, but, in reality, they are those of my Father who sent me. With such an one, there-

fore, who rejects God's words and does not obey them, the Father and I cannot make our abode, and, thus, I cannot manifest myself in this spiritual way, of which alone I speak, except to individual souls."

There was now a short pause, but, after a time, Jesus began again. Glancing back at all He had said to them during the evening, and knowing that much of it must be dark and enigmatical to their simple minds, He lovingly cheered them by some further kind words.

"I have said these things to you, while I am still with you, but I know that you hardly understand some of my sayings, and that you will necessarily forget others. The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, at my request, to be your heavenly Friend and Helper, will, however, throw light on every point, and bring to your vivid remembrance all that I have now told you; giving you a fuller and wider understanding of the truths I have only briefly opened."

"Fear not, my beloved ones, all will be well with you," added He, for they were sorely troubled. "You know how you wish your friends 'Peace' when you part from them. My farewell greeting is 'Peace be with you'—the peace of reconciliation to God, of eternal salvation in my Kingdom, which I have gained for you as your Saviour. My peace, coming from me, and by me, I leave you; for it will be won for you, as an undying gift, by my death, now so near. This gift—my peace—is of a wholly different kind from that which men wish each other in their farewells—mere earthly joy and prosperity, which leave the soul unblessed. My peace carries with it lasting good, and true unfading happiness, for it is that of the soul.

"As I began, therefore, I shall end—Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid, either now or hereafter. Why should it be either? Instead of sadness, you ought to feel joy, for I have told you that, though I go away now, I shall come to you again. Indeed, if you love me, as I know you do, you will be glad to hear me say that I am going back to my Father, for here my Father has used my human weakness to speak His words and do His works, for the salvation of man. The mortal nature I now wear has been His feeble and indirect instrument. But when I return to Him, my Kingdom will be under His direct power. My work, thenceforth, will rest alone, and directly, in His hand, and He will complete what I have begun on earth, by His mighty power, through His Spirit; without human limitation, such as has been inevitable while He wrought through me as the Son of Man—a man like yourselves. He, working with His Almighty power, directly, through His Spirit, is greater, as a help to my Kingdom, than I can be while I act for Him through this dying body.

"I have told you now, while I am still with you, that I shall presently leave you, that your faith may not be shaken when I am gone. The hour of my departure approaches; I shall not speak much with you after this. For the prince of this world—the evil one—

is already coming against me. But fear not, he has no power over me. There is nothing in my soul which he can assail; no sin by which he can claim me as his. Nor do I need to yield to him in anything, for I could, if I chose, avoid the death with which he threatens me. But, that the world may know my love to the Father, and that I do what He has appointed for me as His will, though it be to die; let us rise now from the table, and go forth to meet the powers of darkness, before whom, according to the counsels of God, I shall fall."

The whole company hereupon rose, and prepared to leave the room. But Jesus, full of thoughts which He longed, even yet, to utter, before His ever nearer separation, stood, as it were, fixed to the spot by His love to them, and once more began to speak. He could not bring Himself to break up this last communion He should have with them.

He began by the well-known and beautiful comparison of Himself and the Apostles to a vine and its branches. Perhaps the thought rose from the sight of the wine-cup on the table and its recent use at the evening's feast, or, perhaps, the house stood amidst vines, and branches may have been trained round the window, or the vineyard itself may have lain below in the bright moonlight.

"This vine, with its branches and fruit," said He, pointing to the wine-cup, or to the vines outside, "is a type, in its earthly and visible way, of a heavenly and divine truth. I am the true vine, ye are the branches, and my Father is the husbandman. He sent me into the world: He has given me such faithful souls as you, and joined you with me, in living fellowship and communion: He has tended the growth of the truth in the past, for it has been He who has been working through me, and He will continue to do so after I leave you, by His Holy Spirit.

"As in the natural vine there are fruitful and unfruitful branches, so, in my fellowship, there are some who bear fruit both in word and in act, and some who do not. Only those who are pure and sincere —those who truly love me and keep my commands, have the abiding communion with me from which such fruitfulness springs; for, as the careful husbandman cuts off the unfruitful branch, and cleans away with his pruning-knife all that would hinder the full fruitfulness of the good one, so does my Father with my disciples.

"But be ye comforted. You have been pruned and made clean by your loving and obedient reception of the truths I have told you, and by the discipline through which you have passed. Dismiss anxious care! You will not be cut off as unfruitful branches. My Father will make you still more fruitful; will cleanse away all that hinders your progress in grace, and will perfect you in the end. But, to secure this growing fruitfulness, you must cherish fondly your communion with me; grafted into me, as the branches into the stem of the vine. If you do so, I will not separate myself from you, any

more than the vine tears itself from its branches, but will strengthen you by my spiritual aid. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself if it do not abide in the vine, you cannot bring forth good fruit except ye abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches; the living power to bear fruit comes only from me. But if you abide in me, you will bear much fruit. All true work as my disciples—all spiritual life—comes only from fellowship with me—fellowship close as that of the vine and its branches—each in the other—for apart from me ye can do nothing. As unfruitful branches are cut off by the husbandman, and cast out of the vineyard and left to dry up, and then gathered and cast into the fire and burned, so, those who break away from living in union with me will be cut off from me here, by my Father; the religious life hence will wither up in them while they live, and at the last day they will suffer the judgment of God. But if ye abide in loving, spiritual union with me, and hold fast my commandments and keep them, you may ask what you will, and it will be done to you, for you will, then, ask, in my name, only such things as are in keeping with my will. And it is a great motive for your abiding in me, that your doing so glorifies my Father by leading to your bearing much fruit, through my answers to your prayers. You will further, by this fulfilment of your prayers, become truly, and in the strict sense, my disciples, for the enjoyment of it is the special distinguishing mark of my true disciples only.

"That you may thus continue in living fellowship and spiritual union with me, let me remind you that the uniting bond of this fellowship between me, my Father, and you, is love; and that, on your side, all depends on your showing yourselves true and obedient, in this love to me and in the practice of my commands, as I have shown and still show myself towards my Father and His commands. As He has loved me, I have loved you; see that ye continue henceforth, for ever, to love and obey me, that I may still for ever be able to love you. I have spoken thus, that the same joy which I have in knowing that I abide in my Father's love, may be felt by you, from your knowing that you abide in my love, and that this holy joy of soul may increase, more and more, to a heavenly fulness."

The sound of the word "love," so dear to the heart of Christ, led Him back to the new commandment He had given a few minutes before. That His disciples should love one another was the true secret of keeping His commandments, and so of retaining their place in His heart, and securing the holy joy of soul He desired for them. He now defined His requirements more narrowly. They were to love each other, as He had loved them, and that meant, He told them, self-sacrifice, even to death, for their sakes.

"You wish, I am sure," said He, "to retain my love after I leave you, and will strive to keep my commandments that you may do so.

These commandments are summed up in the one which I gave you to-night, already, that ye love one another. I only add, that that love must be such as I have shown and will presently show to you;—love so great, that, in furtherance of the divine purpose for your salvation, I willingly lay down my life for you. There can be none greater between man and man, and this highest example—this joyful sacrifice of life itself for each other—must be your standard. Nothing less is the ideal I require in my New Society. That spirit alone which would not shrink from this, makes true and full obedience to my command possible, with all the blessings it brings.

"If you thus rise to a love like mine, you will bind me to you in closest undying affection;—affection not as from master to servant, or teacher to disciple, but as of friend to friend. If, by having this love, you do the things I command you, I shall call you my friends, my loved and trusted ones; for doing is the only proof I accept of loving. I know, indeed, that you will, and therefore, henceforth, I call you no longer mere servants, as in the past, but trusted friends. For the servant obeys without knowing his lord's thoughts and plans, but you have been told all I have heard from my Father, so far as you are able to hear and understand it;—told it, not as mere servants and messengers,—the blind instruments of my will; but in the fulness of loving confidence, as sharers of my inmost thoughts and heart.

"But great though the honour be I thus give you, never forget that you have not, like the disciples of the Rabbis, with him whom they follow, chosen me for your teacher, master, and friend. On the contrary, I chose you, not for mere idle friendship, but that I might appoint you to go forth as my disciples, and work in spreading my Kingdom, and bear fruit in winning men to the truth;—fruit that would remain for ever, both for yourselves, and for those you led to the light. Thus you owe all to me; your first discipleship, no less than the friendship to which I have now advanced you; and also that amazing honour I have promised you, that so long as you keep my commands, the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. How much fruit may ye not bear with this heavenly help, and how great the reward before God when ye have borne it!

"Once more, never forget that without true brotherly love all your labour is valueless, for the spirit that prompts them alone gives its worth to your acts or words.

"Wonder not that I enforce this call to mutual love. Let it reign within my New Society, for outside you will have only hatred. But let me comfort you by the thought that, as you know, it has hated me first. To be hated by it, is only to share my lot. And let it still more console you, to remember that this very hatred by the unbelieving world, is a proof that you no longer belong to it. If you belonged to it, it would love its own, for like loves like. It hates you, because I have chosen you out of it, and made you mine. To be hated of the ungodly is a testimony to your worth, as to be loved by them would

be of the reverse. How ought this to cheer you in all your future trials!

"Remember what I said to you to-night, already, 'A servant is not greater than his lord.' If they have persecuted me, as you know they have, they will also persecute you; if they have received my teaching, as you know they have not, they will receive yours as little. They will hate you and persecute you, because you come in my name, confessing me as the Messiah and Saviour,—for they know not Him who sent me.

"This hatred of my name has no excuse, for I have dwelt among men, and taught them the truth, and have done works among them, such as no other messenger of God, or prophet, has done;—works which should have made them feel that God had sent me, for they were such as Israel itself had agreed to accept, as proof of the presence of the Messiah, and they proved that my teaching was His divine word to them. But though they have both heard my teaching, and seen my mighty works, they have not believed. They have, thus, I repeat, no excuse. Nor is their hatred of My Name, hatred of me alone; it is hatred of God, my Father, no less; for my words and works, which they hate and reject, are not mine, but His. And as these words and works are thus the self-revelation of my Father;—as He thus, by them, had made Himself visible in me, so far as the invisible God can do so, their hatred of me involves the awful wickedness of a hatred of the Eternal Father. Yet this hatred of me by the unbelieving world, is not a mere accident or chance, but was foreseen by God and spoken of in ancient prophecy, as you read;—'They hated me without a cause.'

"You may, however, say in your hearts, 'If they have persecuted Thee, and have not kept Thy word; if, after having been taught, and having seen such things, they would not receive them; if they have hated Thee, and Thy Father, and if we are to find the same treatment, what good is there in your sending us to them?' Let me encourage you, and dissipate such thoughts. For when the Helper comes, whom I shall send unto you from the Father—the Spirit of Truth,—who goes forth from the Father, and therefore is able to help you in all your needs,—He will bear witness of me in your souls; teaching you more deeply concerning me, and glorifying me to you in doing so, that you may be able to make right and effective use, in your witness before men, of all you have seen and heard while with me, from the beginning of my public work as the Messiah.

"I have told you these things about the hatred the world will show you, for my sake; that you may be prepared for it, and not stumble, or be offended on account of it; but may meet it with so much the more earnest zeal and fidelity. As I have often told you, they will put you out of the synagogues; but this, hard though it be in its consequences, is not the worst their fanatical hatred will do. You know how the Rabbis teach, that 'he who sheds the blood of the wicked is

as if he offered sacrifice.' They will act on this principle towards you, for the hour comes when every one who kills you will think your blood is an acceptable sacrifice offered to God. Nor will the heathen treat you better. Israel knows neither the Father nor me; and this wilful ignorance of divine things makes them act thus. I tell you all this, that, when these times of persecution come, you may be strengthened in your faith in me, and in your patient endurance of suffering for my sake. I did not speak of these things till now, because they were still distant when you first followed me, and because they might then have frightened you away from me. Besides, as long as I live, the hatred of men will be directed against me, not against you."

It is hard for even the best to rise superior to the present or near, by thinking of the distant or future. The Eleven were thoroughly cast down and dispirited, and stood silent; unable to break the stillness, even by a few of those questions which the disciples of Jewish teachers were in the habit of putting to their masters. The lofty promises of Jesus would one day strengthen their faithful souls, but, for the time, they had no ear for them. As He spoke, He saw this, and gently reproved it.

"Now that I am on the point of returning to my Father," said He, "how are you so wholly engrossed in sadness, that while friends are always wont to ask often from one about to leave them,—'where he is going,'—you have not been eager to do so?" He wished to be asked more closely about His going away, for it seemed as if His disciples had not fully understood His previous words, else they could not be so dejected.

"You forget the comfort I have given you, and dwell only on my near leaving, and the troubles to come after it. But I tell you only the truth, when I say that it is better for you that I go away. For if I were not to do so, your great Helper would not come to you, but, if I go away, I will send Him to you."

The history of the Church, after the ascension of Jesus and the effusion of the Holy Spirit, explains and confirms these words. Only the once Crucified but now Risen One; the glorified Son of God, sitting at the right hand of the Father, could have been proclaimed by the Apostles as the Lord of a new, eternal, and spiritual kingdom of heaven. Only the Conqueror of Death;—the Son of God, returned triumphant to the glory of the Father, could have been announced to the world as the Righteous One, the Victor over the Prince of this world; as He not to believe in whom was sin.

Jesus continued—"You will have to strive, even to blood, with the opposition of the unbelieving world to me, and their evil opinion of me; against their illusion that they are doing right in their unbelief and in their persecution of my servants; and against their belief in the invincible power of wicked men, and of the prince of darkness. All these you must oppose and overcome. But human eloquence is

far too weak for this great task. Without assistance and help from above, you will never be able to convince men of their sin and error, or to drive out the reign of evil. But when your Heavenly Helper has come, He will, through you, show the world their sin in not believing in me, and in persecuting you, my servants. He will also convince them of my righteousness—that is, that I am not unrighteous and sinful, as they suppose, but that my righteousness and innocence have been shown by my not shrinking even from the death of the Cross in the fulfilment of my great work; by my rising from the grave, and thereby proving that my death was a voluntary act of love to man, and by my returning to my Father, which will show that I am His Son, sent by Him as the Messiah. Thus it will be seen that my cause is righteous, and that I am the righteous and holy one of God. He will, finally, convince men of the utter weakness of all the powers of evil, and of their having been judged and condemned of God, by revealing to them the complete overthrow of the reign of the devil, and of the works of darkness, by my life, my teaching, my death, my resurrection, my return to my Father, and my victorious help to you my servants."

He had touched the confines of great and mysterious truths in the future economy of His kingdom, but felt Himself forced to go no farther. A wider field of higher teaching lay before Him, but their present weakness and incapacity to understand lofty spiritual things, forced Him to break off further revelations. "I have yet many things," He continued, "to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. Yet be not cast down. When your Helper, the Spirit of Truth, comes from above, He will give you fuller instructions, and will strengthen your minds to understand them. He will lead you to the knowledge of the truth in its whole extent, and will illuminate for you all the heights and depths of my meaning, in all that I have said to you. Nor need you fear to trust Him less than you have trusted me; for just as I have not spoken of myself, but have only repeated what I have heard from my Father, He, the Spirit of Truth, will not speak for Himself, or of His own promptings, but will utter only what He has heard from God. Nor will He simply explain my words, and reveal higher aspects of the truth. He will also announce to you things future. He will give you, my apostles, the gift of prophecy, by which the future development of my Kingdom will be revealed to you, to fill you with comfort and triumph.

"You must not think, however, that the Holy Spirit will teach you any new or different truths, not connected with me, your Saviour. He will only purify and enlighten your hitherto imperfect conceptions concerning me, and, while thus fitting you to spread my kingdom, will but develop, expand, and complete what I have taught you, and thus increase my glory. All that the Father has is mine, as the Son, consecrated and sent forth by Him to carry out His work; the Son, in whom the Father, for this end, dwells and works in closest

communion, as He also dwells in like communion with the Father. Therefore, as the Holy Spirit will teach you only what He hears from the Father, He can teach you no other doctrine than mine."

But all the instruction and comfort Jesus could administer; all the warnings, on the one hand, of the difficulties and sufferings; and all the supports, on the other, in rich promises of power, help, and blessing from above, could not dispel the sadness of the Apostles, or bring them joy and courage. The near departure of their loved Master filled their minds with abiding dejection and anxious fear.

In tender sympathy, therefore, Jesus once more sought to cheer them. "I said, indeed," He went on, "that very soon you would see me no longer, but yet, a little while more, and you *will* see me again."

The Apostles were more than ever perplexed by these words. They thought only of an earthly communion with their Master, such as they still enjoyed, and could not understand the sudden change of not seeing Him, and seeing Him again, or the double use of the words—"A little while,"—or what He meant by saying so often that He was going to the Father. Wondering questions followed between them, and they were anxious to ask an explanation, when Jesus, seeing their perplexity, anticipated their wish.

"Do you inquire among yourselves," said He, "what I mean by saying, 'A little while, and ye will not see me: and, again, a little while, and ye will see me;' and 'I am going to the Father?' Ye shall, indeed be in great trouble at my death, for I am presently to die, though you seem as if you could not credit it. Indeed, ye will be sad, when the world that rejects me will rejoice. But your sorrow will be turned into joy, as sudden as that of the mother when she bears a son, and forthwith forgets the past for gladness that a man is born into the world; for you know that no joy is so great to a woman, in our nation, as that of having a son. So, truly, you will have sorrow now at my death, but it will pass into abiding joy when you see me again, in my spiritual return.

"In that day the Spirit of Truth will have given you such a full and satisfying knowledge of all that concerns me and my Kingdom, that you will have no need, as now, to ask me respecting any words or matters you do not understand. You will no longer miss my earthly presence, but be joyful in the possession of full enlightenment. For most truly do I assure you, that all you ask my Father in my name—all illumination, all gifts, and joys of the Spirit—He will give you. Hitherto, from want of insight and experience, you have asked nothing in my name, and, therefore, have, as yet, no dream of the boundless gifts your Father in Heaven is ready to give you—no dream of His comforting and supporting grace. From this time, ask in my name, and you will receive what you ask, that your joy may be complete.

"I have spoken of my going away, and of your seeing me again,

and of what would flow from it, in figures, and darkly. But a time comes when I will no more speak to you in this way, but will instruct you clearly and plainly, through the Spirit, respecting the Father. In that day ye shall ask in my name, because you will then be enlightened by the Spirit of Truth, and you will not need that I intercede for you that your prayers, thus offered, may be heard; for the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from Him, and will therefore hear you, without my intercession. Nor must you ever forget this great truth —the sum of my life and work—that I came forth from the Father to appear in the world, and now leave the world to go back to Him again."

The disciples, listening to these words, fancied they now understood, in part, at least, what had before seemed so dark. They had, at least, realized, from His last sentence, that, as He had come forth from God, and was about to return to Him, He must be going to heaven. Perhaps they thought, in their simple way, that they also understood better what He had said about their seeing Him again. It seemed as if He had, already, fulfilled His promise to speak clearly, and without metaphor, to them. That He should, moreover, have known, without being told them, the questions they had in their hearts, so astonished them, that they, further, felt sure He was omniscient, and did not need any one to ask Him, but could answer their questions without having been told them. Awed and vividly impressed, they felt a fresh corroboration of their belief in Him, as having come forth from God, and hastened to tell Him their strengthened conviction.

"Is it so, that you now feel sure you believe in me?" asked Jesus. "An hour is coming, and, indeed, has come, when your faith will have a hard test. Will you stand firm? Alas! how soon will you waver; for, in that hour, you will be scattered, each to his own home, and leave me alone!" "Yet," added He, after a pause, in calm and clear assurance that, though forsaken of man, He would have the helping and protecting presence of the Father—"yet I am not alone, for the Father is with Me."

"I have spoken as I have," He continued:—"have given you these consolations and promises, that you might have rest and peace in Me, by communion with Me as the loving and loved. In the world, indeed, affliction is your lot, for men will hate and persecute you, as I have said, for my sake; but, be of good heart. I have conquered and broken the might of the world and its prince, and they can neither hinder your salvation, nor check the triumph of My Kingdom."

The farewell discourse was ended with this note of triumph—"I have conquered the world!" But now, before He went forth into the night, so big with fate, He could not break up for ever the communion He had had with them so long, through joy and sorrow,

without gathering them round Him in a parting prayer. He was about to die for the redemption of the world, and, as the Great High Priest of humanity, would make intercession, before yielding Himself the sacrifice. I venture, reverently, to amplify the expression, that the import may be more easily caught.

Lifting up His eyes to heaven—the Apostles standing, as the manner of their nation was, while He prayed—He began, "Father, the hour of my death has now come. Glorify Thy Son on the completion of the work of salvation, that Thy Son may glorify Thee as its author, before man. Glorify Him, in accordance with Thy will, by which Thou hast given Him power over all men; for Thou hast appointed Him the only Saviour and Redeemer, to carry out Thy purpose of salvation, which regards the world; that He should give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. And this is everlasting life, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent—Me, Jesus, the Messiah. I have glorified Thee on earth, for I have made known Thy name, Thy will, and Thy plan of salvation for man, and have thus completed the work Thou hast given Me to do. Therefore, glorify Me, now, O Father, when I rise from my work on earth into Thy presence, in heaven, with the glory which I had with Thee, before the world was. Let me enter again into that divine communion in Thine uncreated glory, which I had before the creation of the world!"

He had, till now, prayed for Himself. He passed next to intercession for His disciples, urging His faithful obedience to His divine mission, as a ground for His being heard.

"I have made known Thy name unto the men whom Thou hast given me out of the unbelieving world. They were Thine own, for they were of Thy true Israel, and Thou gavest them to Me, and faithfully and truly did they receive my words as Thine, and they have kept them. In much they may have failed to understand, but they have been true and firm in their belief in Me, as having been sent by Thee, and as speaking Thy truth. Now, also, they have learned to know, and do acknowledge, that all that Thou hast given me—all that I have said and done—is, as it truly is, from Thee!

"I pray for them. I pray not, now, for those who know Thee not; the unbelieving world, but for Thine own, now in Thy presence —Thine own, whom Thou hast given Me. My whole life and work has been, and is, a prayer for the world at large, from which My people must be gathered, but I pray, now, for these, Thy servants, because they are Thine, though Thou hast given them to Me. And all things that are Mine are also Thine, and Thine are Mine: the work, the aim, the means, the power, the grace, are, alike, Mine and Thine, for I am in Thee and Thou in Me. Neither I, nor Thou, Eternal Father, work, nor have, for Himself, but each for the other, and, thus, though they are Thine, I am glorified in them. Great is their need of Thy help, for I, their friend and helper, am about to

leave them, but they remain in the world that hates them for my sake. Without Thy heavenly aid and protection, they will not be able to do the work Thou hast appointed them. Therefore, Holy Father, keep them true to Thy name, which Thou gavest Me to make known to them, that by their common faith and love they may be one, as Thou and I are one. While I was in the world, I watched and protected those whom Thou thus committedst to My care, and kept them faithful to Thy name;—kept them from the evil one, from denying Thee, from falling away from Thee; and none of them has perished but the son of perdition—as could not but be, for the Scripture must be fulfilled. Thou must watch and keep them, now that I shall leave them!

"But, now, I come to Thee, and these things I speak, being yet in the world, that they may have, in their own souls, the perfect joy that is in Mine, feeling assured confidence that the grave will not have dominion over Me, and that they will have Thee for their helper. I have given them Thy word, and for their receiving it, the world has hated them; because they do not belong to it, as I do not. Therefore, O Father, keep them! I ask not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world because it hates them; for suffering and struggle are needed to perfect their spiritual life, and to spread abroad my Kingdom. But I ask that Thou shouldest protect them from the evil one, that they, too, become not sons of perdition. They, like Me, are not of the world, for it is the kingdom of the evil one; therefore, they need Thy protecting care, and as Thine own will surely have it.

"Thou hast brought them out from amidst the unbelieving and hostile world, and hast given them to Me, and they have received, and kept, Thy Word, made known to them by Me. Thus they live in the Truth, for Thy Word is Truth; sanctify them in this, the sphere of their new spiritual life: not only keep them in it, but consecrate and prepare them for their great work, by giving them, through the Spirit of holiness and truth, divine enlightenment, power, boldness, love, zeal. Even as Thou didst send Me into the world, but didst first consecrate Me by the Spirit, given without measure, that I might accomplish the work Thou gavest Me to do, I have also sent them into the world, and they, O Father, need a similar consecration, in Thine own measure, to prosper in Thy work.

"For their sakes I consecrate myself to Thee, in My death—as a holy offering—for I am both high priest and sacrifice; that they, also, may be made holy in the Truth, by Thy Spirit—the Helper whom Thou wilt send, because I, the Holy One, have thus died for them.

"But I pray not for these, Thy servants now before Thee, alone, but for all them, also, who will henceforth believe in Me, through their word—that they all, teachers, believers, and converts, may be one, in mutual fellowship and communion of love; the copy of that between Thee, Father, and Me:—communion so deep and holy that

Thou art in Me, and I, in Thee. May they be, thus, one in each other, by being one in Us, by loving vital communion with Thee and Me, that the unbelieving world may have a visible proof, and may believe, that Thou didst send Me—the source—the centre—the stay of such heavenly love.

"That all who shall, now, or hereafter, believe in Me, may be thus, one, in holy love and life, even as We are One—I have given them, as their future inheritance, at My coming, in My eternal Kingdom, part in that heavenly glory which Thou hast given Me; that they may share it with Me, for ever. I have given it them, that they may be one, even as We are one, for how strong must it be as a bond of unity that they are heirs together of the same glory with Me in heaven. I have given it them that they may thus be perfectly joined in one; I dwelling in them and Thou in Me; that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them with the same Father's love, with which Thou hast loved Me; and may thus believe on Me—the Saviour of the world.

"Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me, from all the generations of men, be with Me hereafter, to enjoy eternal life, and everlasting communion with Me, in that heavenly world whither I am now going. It is the high reward of their faithfulness, their supreme consolation amidst all earthly trials, their glorious animating hope. I will that their joy may be full, in seeing and sharing My heavenly glory, as they have seen and shared My humiliation on earth—that glory with Thyself, which Thou hast given Me because Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.

"Righteous Father, I know that Thou wilt carry out this My will, for, though the world has not known or acknowledged Thee, as revealed in My words and deeds—I have known Thee, as working in Me, and revealing Thyself through Me—known Thee by direct immediate knowledge—and these, Thy servants before Thee, having opened their hearts, and received My word, have known and believed that Thou hast sent Me. I have made known unto them Thy Name, and will make it known through the Spirit whom I will send; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me, Thou mayest also make dwell in their hearts, and that I, by the Spirit, may dwell in them for ever."

How sublimely this prayer was realized in the history of the Apostles, the "Acts" and the Epistles abundantly illustrate. It was their common glory to believe that nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ; that He, by His Spirit, was with them, and that thay overcame all that opposed, through His help. The contrast between the dejected, faint-hearted, materializing Galilæan fishermen and peasants of the Gospels, and the heroic, spiritual confessors of Pentecost and after-times, is, itself, a miracle, great beyond all others. The illumination of soul, the grandeur of conception, the loftiness of aim, are a transformation from a lower to an indefi-

nitely higher mental and moral condition, as complete as the change from early twilight to noon, and find their only solution in the admission that they must have received the miraculous spiritual enlightenment from above which Jesus had promised to send them.

CHAPTER LX.

THE ARREST.

While Jesus was tenderly bidding farewell to His few followers in the upper room, all was bustle and excitement among the Church authorities, now on the track of His blood by the help of Judas.

It was the great holiday of the year at Jerusalem: the week in which, beyond any other time, the whole population gave themselves up to rejoicing. The citizens, from the highest to the lowest, were reaping the great gold harvest of the year from the myriads of pilgrims, and they, on their side, had the excitement of numbers, and novelty, and religious enthusiasm. A mere mountain city, Jerusalem lived by the Temple, either directly or indirectly, and it was now the loadstone that had drawn the whole Jewish world around it.

With the craft that habitually marked him, the tetrarch Antipas had come up from Tiberias, to show how devoutly he honoured the Law, and had taken his residence in the old castle of the Asmoneans, which still remained in the hands of his family. It was near the Xystus, and exactly opposite the Temple, to which he could cross by the upper bridge, over the Tyropœon Valley, between Zion and Moriah.

Pilate, also, had arrived from Cæsarea, to secure, in person, the preservation of order in the dangerous days of the feast. His quarters were in the new palace, built by Herod the Great on Zion. It was the pride of Jerusalem. "The kinds of stone used in its construction," says Josephus, "were countless. Whatever was rare abounded in it. The roofs astonished every one by the length of their beams, and the beauty of their adornment. Vessels, mostly of gold and silver, rich in chasing, shone on every side. The great dining-hall had been constructed to supply table-couches for three hundred guests. Others opened in all directions, each with a different style of pillar. The open space before the palace was laid out in broad walks, planted with long avenues of different trees, and bordered by broad deep canals and great ponds, flowing with cool, clear water, and set off along the banks with innumerable works of art." It was the vast citadel-palace in which the tragedies of the family of Herod has been enacted. Here Archelaus had reigned, and Glaphyra had died. By right of war, the Romans had taken it, as the chief building of the city, for the residence of the procurators, and had made it the Prætorium, or headquarters. Its enclosure—large enough

to permit almost an army to be gathered in it, if necessary—ran along the inner side of the first city wall, and was connected with the great castles of white stone—Mariamne, Hippicus, and Phasaelus, which Herod had built; the whole constituting, in fact, a vast fortification.

The high priest at the time of the Passover, as we have seen, was Caiaphas. The real head of the priesthood, however, was the crafty Hannas, or Ananus, without whom nothing of moment was done in the affairs of the theocracy. As father of the greatest Sadducean family, he was fitly notorious for his harsh judgments, and was presently to take the chief part in the death of Jesus, as his son afterwards did in that of St. James. He had been appointed high priest by Quirinius in the year A.D. 7, but had been deprived of the dignity seven years latter by Valerius Gratus. The unique honour was reserved to him, however, of seeing his five sons successively pontiffs —one of them twice—a distinction which, in later years, gained for him, among his countrymen, the name of the most fortunate of men.

Intrigue and unwearied plotting were the very life of Hannas and his house. The gliding, deadly, snakelike smoothness with which they seized their prey was a wonder even to their own generation, and had given them a by-name as hissing vipers. When Quirinius, after the census, sacrificed the high priest Joazer, who had brought on himself universal hatred by his services to the Romans, Hannas was chosen as the one of the Temple aristocracy least displeasing either to the Romans or the Jews. He had managed to maintain his influence under three procurators through difficult times. Under Valerius Gratus, he had had to give way to Ismael Ben Phabi, but, after a year, had had him displaced, in favour of Eleazar, one of his own sons. He himself declined to take the place again, on the same ground on which Jonathan, another of his sons, afterwards did so, in the days of Herod Agrippa, when that king wished him to take it a second time. The family, though loose enough in more serious matters, were very strict as to hierarchical order. No one, they held, should put on again the sacred vestments after having once laid them off, and released himself from the obligations under which their wearer lay. Hannas bowed to this rule, as vital to the theocratic constitution, by the help of which his house stood at the head of Israel. He chose, therefore, henceforth to guide the reins in safe obscurity, but with a firm hand.

His sons, Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and Hannas, successively became high priests, but when, at his death, the leading spirit was gone, the brutality of the Sadducee came more prominently into play, and speedily led to the ruin of the house.

Among the high priests who had interrupted the direct reign of this family, Caiaphas, son-in-law of Hannas, ruled longest. At the time of the condemnation of Jesus, he had held the high priesthood for seventeen years, having given Pilate no excuse for setting him aside, in spite of the conflict respecting the eagles, the shields, and the con-

duits of Jerusalem. He even retained it till after the great day, in the year A.D. 36, when the sacred vestments, so long held from them, were handed over by Vitellius permanently to the Jews, instead of being given out to them from the strong room of Antonia, a week before each great feast, for seven days' purifications, washings, and consecrations, to free them from heathen defilement, before they could be worn, Caiaphas, however, had little to do with procuring this great favour, and was almost immediately after deposed; Jonathan, the son of Hannas, being appointed in his stead.

Thus, at the time of the condemnation of Jesus, the acting high priest was only a puppet in the hands of a powerful family, at the head of which stood Hannas, his father-in-law, sorely envied by the rest of the priestly aristocracy.

Jewish tradition describes the grades of the ancient hierarchy as consisting of the high priest; his deputy, or Sagan; two suffragans of the Sagans; seven priests, to whom were entrusted the keys of the Temple; and three treasurers, whose office it was to give out the sacred vessels. Of those holding these offices when Jesus was condemned, we can still darkly make out some. Beside Caiaphas, at his right hand, sat Hannas, the titular second, but real head. Jochanan Ben Zacchai, called John in the Acts of the Apostles, and one Alexander, seem to have held the next dignities, and after them came the five sons of Hannas, already an old man, Eleazar, Jonathan, Theophilus, Matthias, and Hannas—the five apparently hinted at in the awful parable of Dives and his five brothers—all to be high priests hereafter, and Hannas, the younger, to stain his pontificate by the murder of James, the brother of Jesus.

The names of some other members of what we may call the self-constituted high ecclesiastical council, still survive. Among these were Joazer and Eleazar, the sons of that Simon Boëthus of Alexandria, father of the second Mariamne, the belle of Jerusalem, married by Herod. The father, though well-nigh a heretic in the eyes of the national party, had been made high priest by his royal son-in-law, and his sons had succeeded him in the dignity, but bore an evil name for their state and violence. Their guard of spearmen, indeed, became an object of popular hatred. Simon, surnamed Kanthera—the Quarrelsome—the murderer of St. James, the son of Zabdai,—and his son Elioneus, afterwards high priest, had a right to attend, and did so with a pomp which brought on the family the curse of the people—"Woe to your fine feathers, ye family of Kanthera!" Ismael Ben Phabi, the handsomest man of his day, was another mitred high counsellor, to be famed hereafter for the clubs and blows of his serving men, the greed of his bailiffs, his shameless nepotism, and the Oriental luxury of his dress; one outer tunic of which cost a hundred minæ—equal, perhaps, at this day, to eighteen hundred pounds. There were, also, Johanan Ben Nebedai—the persecutor of St. Paul; infamous in later days as a sensual glutton, who seized

even the holy sacrifices for his feasts; and Issachar, of Kefar Barkai, who, in his pontificate of a later day, would not sacrifice except in silk gloves, for fear of soiling his hands, and lived to have those hands barbarously cut off by King Agrippa. Such were the men about to seize Jesus. No wonder that even the Talmud relates that voices were heard from the Holy of Holies, crying—"Depart from the Temple, ye sons of Eli; ye defile the house of Jehovah!"

The elders of the people—a body equivalent to a Jewish Senate—were in no less agitation respecting Jesus; for they, also, were identified with the preservation of things as they were. One or two of them—Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea—were secretly in his favour, but they had not moral courage to take his part openly. The names of the rest have perished.

The college of Rabbis took an equally vigorous part, but its members at this time can only be guessed, though some who had met the boy Jesus, twenty years before, in the Temple school, doubtless survived.

It was late in the night of Thursday when Jesus had ended His last discourse and farewell prayer. According to the immemorial custom of the nation to mingle songs of praise to God with their feasts, the little band had already sung the first two of the six Psalms—the one hundred and thirteenth to one hundred and eighteenth—which formed the great Hallelujah of the Passover and all other feasts. The stillness of the night had been broken by the sound at the time when the second cup had been poured out. Now, at the close, the voices of the eldest of them chanted, with slow, solemn strains, the remainder of the Hallelujah—the rest responding with the word, Hallelujah, at the close of each verse. The anthem began fitly—"Not unto us, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake," and closed with the words of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm—"Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah;" the Apostles responding—"In the name of Jehovah, Hallelujah!" And, now, all was over, and the Eleven, following their Master, went out into the night. They were on their way to Gethsemane.

The spirit of Jesus had, hitherto, been calm and serene. But the final close: the break with all the past: the shadow, deeper than that of Kedron, before Him, for the time brought on a reaction, which, till it passed, overwhelmed Him with trouble. No wonder the Apostles had been cast down when even He, who had been exhorting them to dismiss sorrow, was Himself moved. Behind Him lay life, before Him death: He was about to leave friends: and the fair earth, which, as a man, He loved so well; and His infant Church, the hope of the world He had come to save. Before Him lay, not only natural death, but shame, derision, misconception. He whose whole soul was truth, was to be crucified as a deceiver: the one on earth absolutely loyal to God, He was to die as a blasphemer. To be misrepre-

sented: to feel the utter falseness of charges, and to be crucified on the ground of them! How might it affect the little band, to whom the future of His kingdom was entrusted? He had hitherto restrained Himself from using His supernatural power in His own behalf—would He still do so? He had but to speak, and all would be changed; for He who could calm the waves of the sea, could still the tumult of the people, and what were Temple guards or Roman soldiers against legions of angels? Would He still absolutely subordinate all thought of self? Would He, to the end, let men do with Him as they pleased, though He had at His command all the powers of heaven? The temptation of the desert and of the mountain may, for a moment, have returned, and who can tell the struggle it must have been to overcome it?

Nor was even this all. The mysteries of the divine counsels must be for ever unknown, but they pressed, in all their weight, on His absolutely sinless soul. He was to give His life a ransom for man: to be made an offering for sin, though He knew none: to be repaid for infinite love and goodness by ignominy and shame. Perfect innocence freely yielding itself to misconception and death, for the unworthy and vile, would be transcendent even in a man, but in the Son of God. Who can tell what it was to have left the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens to stoop to Calvary!—for Him who could raise the dead to descend to the tomb! No wonder His human soul was for the moment eclipsed and clouded.

They passed, silent and sad, down the steep side of the Kedron, for the town gate was open that night as it was Passover, and, crossing by the bridge, were on the road which leads over the Mount of Olives to Bethany. The noise of the multitude had passed away, and the world lay asleep under the great Passover-moon. The path lay among stone-walled orchards and gardens, which Titus was, hereafter, to find so many deadly battle-grounds, with the walls for ramparts. He had gone out of the city, each night, to Bethany, but had no intention of doing so now, for He knew that His hour had come. Always given to solitary prayer, among the hills so dear to Him as a Galilæan, He had often turned aside to commune with His Father on one part or other of Olivet, and, this night, chose the stillness and shade of a spot which His presence made, henceforth, sacred for ever. An olive orchard lay near—known by the name of the Oil-Press—or, as we are accustomed to think of it—Gethsemane. It was called so from a rock-hewn trough in it, in which the rich olives were trodden with the feet, the oil flowing into a lower vat at hand. The new leaves were opening over the branches as they passed, and the moonlight fell through their motionless network, on the tender spring grass. Stillness, peace, solitude, filled earth and air: even the birds slept safely on the boughs, under the great sky; for they, too, had a Heavenly Father. Moriah rose in richly wooded terraces behind, crowned with the snow-white Temple in its magnificence, and, be-

fore them, from its border of gardens and orchards, the yellow slopes of Olivet swelled between them and the loved cottage of Bethany.

Amidst this quiet and beauty of nature Jesus turned aside, and entered the enclosure of Gethsemane, to strengthen His soul for the coming crisis. It was a fitting place—amidst olives, the emblems of peace!

A square, stone-walled spot, close by the path to Bethany, on the edge of the Kedron ravine, under the shadow of the Temple hill, is still shown as the spot. Venerable olive-trees, tended with superstitious care, are claimed as the very witnesses of our Saviour's agony, but it is fatal to the belief in their age, that Titus afterwards cut down all the trees around Jerusalem, for military use, and that the same fate has befallen the whole neighbourhood even in later sieges. But the gnarled trunks, twenty to thirty feet high, the broad branches, and the still seclusion, at least reproduce the outward features of the scene.

When the soul is overwhelmed it seeks to be alone, and yet not too far from human sympathy and help. To take all the Eleven with Him, into the depths of the garden, would have invaded the sacredness of His retirement. Only three, the most trusted—His long-tried, and early followers—Peter, whose guest He had been in the bright Capernaum days, and James and John, knit to Him by special tenderness, if not even by relationship—were let follow Him beyond the first few steps into the enclosure. The others were to sit down and rest, while He went into the deeper shade, to pray.

Followed by the Three, He passed out of hearing of the rest, and presently, leaving even these three behind, with the words, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death—tarry ye here, and watch with Me," He went on, about a stone's cast—alone. And, now, the great pent-up sorrow burst forth. It had been gathering, no one knows how long, but the excitement of action had repressed it as yet—as the wind keeps a heavy rain cloud from breaking. But, here, instead of the city and its multitudes of men, there was silence and loneliness: instead of the distractions of conflict with enemies, or discourses with friends, He was face to face with His own thoughts, and with the Past and the Future, and that in the night, and in such awful isolation. For it seemed as if even heaven were as far from Him as the sympathy of earth: as if even its lights had gone out, and He was treading the valley of the shadow of death in a horror of thick darkness. Must He bear all? Must the cup be drunk to the dregs? Was redemption possible only at the awful price that so oppressed His soul? Could the hour not pass? Was it not possible for the Eternal Father to save Him from it?

The sacred writers labour to describe the agony that overwhelmed Him. They tell us that He first kneeled, then fell on His face on the earth, and prayed with strong crying and tears, till His sweat became, as it were, great drops of blood, falling down to the ground. He

was "exceeding sorrowful," "sore amazed," "very heavy." His soul, as it were, sank under the vision that rose before it. "O my Father," He cried, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not my will, but Thine, be done." But as long as there was a struggle of the frail human nature, and a cry, however reverent and lowly, for change, if possible, in the burden laid on Him, there could be no peace. Rising from the ground, in His agony of spirit, even human sympathy and presence seemed as if they would be a relief. He came therefore to the Three, but only to find that, in His long, wrestling supplications, even they, His nearest ones, overcome by weariness of body and spirit, lay sunk in deep sleep. Rousing Peter—lately so boastful—He gently reproved and warned him, and with him, the others. "What! could you not watch with me one hour? Watch, and pray as ye do so, that ye may not expose yourselves to temptation to be untrue to me, and to be offended at me, as I have said you would. The spirit indeed is willing to stand by me faithfully, but human nature, with its instinct of self-preservation, is weak, and if you heed not, will make you fall!"

Leaving them again, He once more prostrated Himself in prayer, but the clouds were already breaking, for His whole being had returned to its habitual harmony with the will of God. Every desire or wish of His own, was passing like a troubled dream. "O my Father," cried He now, "if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." Perfect peace of soul can only be found in absolute submission to the One Supreme Will, and that He was fast attaining. Returning to the Three—who knows for what?—He found them asleep again. They were losing, by their hour's sloth, the opportunity of cheering and helping their Master in His sorest trial. Man had thus failed Him, but the need of human comfort was passing away. Retiring, therefore, once more, and prostrating Himself a third time, the same calm, child-like submission to His Father again rose from His lips. He had triumphed, He had been heard in *that*, He feared. He no longer craved a change, even if possible, in the ordered course of the divine purposes: His earnest cry had passed into still submission; His intense desire into holy acquiescence. He thought no longer of Himself, but of the perfect love and wisdom of the Father. He had ceased to have a wish: enough for Him, henceforth, the all-holy, all-wise, all-loving, will of the Father. His spirit had broken through the cloud that for a moment darkened it, and reposed once more in the calm light of the face of God. The tempter had fled, and, in His place, as after the victory of the wilderness, we are told by St. Luke, "there appeared an angel unto Him from Heaven, strengthening Him."

Meanwhile, Judas had been busy. Exposed, and dismissed by his Master from the company of the Apostles, he had only been the more set to carry out his miserable purposes. Hastening through the illuminated streets to the authorities, he had, forthwith, reported

that the favourable moment seemed to have come. Jesus had, once more, ventured into Jerusalem, and though it might not be safe to take Him in the thronged city, it would be easy to come upon Him outside the walls, as He was in the habit of going each night for prayer to a spot at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The traitor meant Gethsemane.

The authorities remained in permanent session till the arrest was effected, and at once detached part of the Temple Watch, a body acting as the police of the Temple and only armed, in a few cases, with wooden batons or clubs. The officers of the watch, and even some of the chief priests and elders, in their excitement, accompanied them. It had been thought unwise, however, to trust so grave a matter to an undisciplined and weak force, and the high priest had, therefore, communicated with Pilate, representing, doubtless, that he proposed the arrest of a false Messiah, dangerous to the Roman power, and feared a rescue. A "band" had, therefore, been told off from the troops in Antonia, and these, under the chiliarch in command of the garrison, waited their orders. A rabble of the servants of the high priests and chief men, with lanterns and torches, to discover Jesus should He attempt to hide Himself, led the way, behind Judas, who went foremost as guide. It was the full moon of April, but the trees and recesses might aid an attempt at escape.

Jesus had just returned from His third prayer, and was rousing His disciples; when He heard the noise of the soldiers and the crowd, and saw their lights approaching. The disappointment, even in His most trusted friends, asleep when they should have watched, and leaving it to Himself to discover Judas and his band, wounded His heart. With keen but gentle irony, therefore, He told them that they might sleep on now and take their rest, if they chose; their watching was no longer needed. His hour had come. Then, speaking in a serious strain, He bade them "rise and go out with Him, for the traitor was at hand."

Judas and his employers had utterly misjudged the character of Jesus. Knowing all that was before Him, and, now, calmly victorious over momentary human weakness, He did not wait for His enemies, but, taking His disciples with Him, went out of the garden enclosure to meet them. "Whom seek ye?" said He, as they approached. "Jesus the Nazarene," answered the foremost. To their confusion, the calm, self-possessed speaker presently told them that He was Jesus. Not a few in the Jewish crowd now gathered before Him, had heard Him spoken of as a prophet, and had, perhaps, even accepted Him as such. They had all heard of His supernatural power, from whatever source, and He might now use it against them, though hitherto He had never availed Himself of it for personal ends. His kingly composure and dignity, moreover, awed them, for grandeur of soul and bearing enforce acknowledgment. Withal, it may be, He revealed a momentary glimpse of His trans-

figuration splendour, to show that He freely surrendered Himself, because His hour had come. From whatever cause, the crowd fell back in confusion, overturning each other in their alarm. "Whom seek ye?" asked Jesus once more. "Jesus the Nazarene," muttered the boldest. "I told you," replied He, "that I am He: if you seek me, let these men, my disciples, go their way." He had said, that of those whom the Father had given Him He had lost none, and even in an earthly sense, He would now protect them.

Fear, as yet, paralyzed the crowd. Jesus had calmly owned Himself, but no one dared to lay hold of Him. Judas, still under the weird spell of evil, might well dread that all would miscarry. He had given a signal by which to know his late Master, reckoning on having to point Him out, and would now embolden those with him, by himself taking the first step in further action. He had arranged that he should mark Jesus to them, by going up to Him and giving Him the customary kiss of a disciple to his teacher. Stepping out, therefore, from the crowd, into the circle of the disciples, as one of their number, he approached with a hypocritical "Hail, Rabbi," and kissed Him tenderly. He knew, by long experience, that he might do so safely. To the calm and keen question of Jesus—"Good friend, for what have you come?"—he returned no answer: for what answer could he give? But he had gained his end, for those behind, encouraged by his remaining uninjured after such treachery, laid hold of Jesus and bound Him, without the least resistance on His part.

Now followed the only act of violence; for Peter, impetuous as he was brave, could not see his Master thus led away, a prisoner, without a word or act on the part of His friends. "Lord, shall we smite them with the sword?" cried he; and without waiting an answer, or thinking of the hopelessness of a rescue, or of the odds against himself alone, he drew the sword he had hung by his side, and made a fierce cut at one of the servants of the high priest, fortunately only grazing the skull, but yet cutting off an ear. It was a splendidly heroic act, but sadly out of place under such a Teacher. Turning to the wounded man, and at the same moment rebuking Peter, Jesus deprecated the fury of the crowd at the brave attack, by soft words and an effacement of the injury done. "Suffer thus far," said He, and then touched the ear, and healed it. Forthwith, turning to Peter, He told him to sheathe the sword. "He who uses violence," added He, "will suffer violence. If you use the sword, you expose all your lives to danger. Shall I not drink the cup which my Father hath given me? Shall I hesitate to please Him? If I wished to escape suffering, Peter, dost thou not know that I could ask my Father, and He would send me, instead of your help, twelve legions of angels—a legion for each of you—to protect me? But, then, that would not happen which the Scriptures have foretold I must undergo."

The disciples, after the first impulsive thought, had abandoned all idea of resistance; and as any attempt to rescue Jesus was clearly

hopeless, since He did not put forth His supernatural power on His own behalf, and would not let them do anything; and as they themselves seemed in danger, through the impetuosity of Peter; all took to flight as soon as they saw their Master fairly in the hands of His enemies.

The intense excitement of the hierarchy had broken through all restraints of official dignity. The proposal for the arrest had been too important a matter to be trusted to any underlings, and hence, some of the head priests, and of the "elders," had joined the leaders of the Temple police in the wild march to Gethsemane. Surrounded on all sides, and firmly bound, as if His captors still feared that He would escape or be rescued, Jesus now turned to these dignitaries, so sadly out of their place in such a scene, and calmly, but keenly, brought home to them their shame. "You come out against me," said He, "as you might against a robber, or the head of a rising, with swords and clubs. I sat, day by day, in the Temple, teaching, in the thick of the people. You had every opportunity for laying hold on me then, but you did nothing. The darkness of night is fitted for your designs: it is your hour: the powers of evil work by choice in the dark. But, in all this, there is no chance: it happens only in accordance with the predictions of the prophets." He said no more, and let them lead Him away. The disciples were scattered, but one form hovered after them, white in the moonlight. It was that of a young man, who had, apparently, been roused from sleep by the tumult, and having thrown his white linen sleeping cloth round him in his haste, was following Jesus towards the city. Who he was must remain for ever unknown. Was it Mark himself, who alone relates it? or one from the house likely attached to Gethsemane? Some have supposed him to have been Lazarus; others have had different conjectures; he was, at least, some faithful heart, eager to see what they would do with his Lord. The soldiers had let the Apostles flee, having no orders to arrest them; but this strange apparition attracted their attention, and they sought to lay hold on him. Casting off the cloth around him, however, he escaped out of their hands.

Yet there were friendly eyes following the sad scene, in the safe darkness of the night. Peter and another of the Apostles, who could only be John, had fled no further than safety demanded, and followed the crowd, at a distance, unable to leave one they held so dear.

The great object with the authorities was to hurry forward the proceedings against their prisoner so quickly, that they might hand Him over to the Romans as one already condemned, before the people could be roused on His side. They had gained their point, so far.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus was first led to the mansion of Hannas, the head of the reigning priestly family, either in deference to his recognized influence, or because, as the oldest high priest, he was still recognized as the rightful, if not legal, dignitary. He could see Jesus, and hear His defence, and advise his son-in-law how to act. His "snakelike" craft might help the less acute Caiaphas.

What passed before Hannas, or what hints he sent Caiaphas, are not known. It may be that he simply passed on the prisoner to the legal high priest at once, hurrying to follow Him, and secure His condemnation.

The houses of the great, in the East, are, rather, a group of buildings, or chambers, of unequal height, near or above each other, with passages between, and intervening open spaces; the different structures having independent entrances, and separate roofs. Such a house, or rather cluster of houses, has usually the form of a large hollow square, the four sides of which surround a roomy court; paved, in some cases; in others, planted with trees, and ornamented with a lawn of soft green. Sometimes, an underground cistern, a spring, or a bath, offers the luxury of abundant water, and makes the court an agreeable spot for relaxation or refreshment. Porticos and galleries surround it, and furnish chambers for guests and entertainments. In some houses there is also a forecourt, enclosed from the street by walls, and, in all, the inner court is reached by an archway through the front building—"the porch," in the narrative of the Gospels.

The hierarchical party were in permanent session in the mansion or "palace" of Caiaphas. A commission, consisting mainly of the chief priests, with Caiaphas at their head, had been appointed, to await the result of the treachery of Judas; for the whole party, in its alarm, had extemporized joint action, though their taking any judicial steps at all was irregular, for they formed no legal court or recognized tribunal. They were simply acting as a self-constituted body; partisans of established ecclesiastical order, and defenders of their own vested rights; gathered, at the summons of the high priest, in the blind excitement of fanaticism and passion, without rules of judicial proceeding, or legal standing as a court. The chief Rabbis of the school of Hillel generally kept aloof from such tumultuous and violent proceedings, which were already too common, and left them to those of the fierce school of Schammai, and to the merciless Sadducees. The name Sanhedrim is given in the Gospels to such extemporized assemblies, simply as such; for the word means "an assembly." But it is not used in them as the title of a legal tribunal. It was before a mob of dignitaries, not a "court," that Jesus was brought.

The commission were awaiting the arrival of their prey in the house of Caiaphas, who, as high priest, was the only representative of Judaism recognized by the Romans, and, therefore, the only one who could hold official relations with Pilate, to ask him to carry out their predetermined resolution to put Jesus to death.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE JEWISH TRIAL.

Passing through the closed porch, or archway, into the inner court, His captors led Jesus to one of the chambers opening from it, where His judges sat, ready to go through the mockery of a trial. The Roman soldiers had been halted outside, for their presence would have been a defilement, but the Jewish serving men went in with the prisoner, though only the few required accompanied Him to the inner chamber. The tribunal about to condemn Him, it must not be forgotten, was not a legal "court," but simply a self-constituted "Committee of Public Safety" extemporized by the excited Temple authorities and Rabbis, like the Vigilance Committees of America; with a Jewish Fouquier Tinville for President, in the person of the Sadducee Caiaphas. Knowing the illegality of their proceedings, they could only venture to propose the framing an indictment to lay before Pilate, and trust to their violence for extorting a condemnation from him.

The hierarchy were masters of form, and knew how to honour the appearance of justice while mocking the reality, In imitation of the traditional usages of the Sanhedrim, while it existed, the judges before whom Jesus was led sat, turbaned, on cushions or pillows, in Oriental fashion, with crossed legs, and unshod feet, in a half circle; Caiaphas, as high priest, in the centre, and the chief or oldest, according to precedence, on each side. The prisoner was placed, standing, before Caiaphas; at each end of the semicircle sat a scribe, to write out the sentence of acquittal or condemnation; some bailiffs, with cords and thongs, guarded the Accused, while a few others stood behind, to call witnesses, and, at the close, to carry out the decision of the judges.

Like most other matters in the Judaism of the time, nothing could be fairer, or more attractive, on paper, but on paper alone, than the rules for the trial of prisoners. The accused was, in all cases, to be held innocent, till proved guilty. It was an axiom, that "the Sanhedrim was to save, not to destroy life." No one could be tried and condemned in his absence, and when a person accused was brought before the court, it was the duty of the president, at the outset, to admonish the witnesses to remember the value of human life, and to take care that they forgot nothing that would tell in the prisoner's favour. Nor was he left undefended; a Baal-Rib or counsel was appointed, to see that all possible was done, for his acquittal. Whatever evidence tended to aid him was to be freely admitted, and no member of the court who had once spoken in favour of acquittal could afterwards vote for condemnation. The votes of the youngest

of the judges were taken first, that they might not be influenced by their seniors. In capital charges, it required a majority of at least two to condemn, and while the verdict of acquittal could be given at once, that of guilty could only be pronounced the day after. Hence, capital trials could not begin on the day preceding a Sabbath, or public feast. No criminal trial could be carried through in the night; the judges who condemned any one to death had to fast all the day before, and no one could be executed on the same day on which the sentence was pronounced.

Rules so precise and so humane condemn the whole trial of Jesus, before Caiaphas, as an outrage. It was, in fact, an anticipation of the prostitution of justice which Josephus records as common in the later days of Jerusalem. "Fictitious tribunals and judicatures," he tells us, "were set up, and men called together to act as judges though they had no real authority, when it was desired to secure the death of an opponent." As in those later instances, so now, in the case of Jesus, they kept up the form and mockery of a tribunal to the close. No accuser appeared, and the judge himself took the office, in utter violation of all propriety. Witnesses against the prisoner alone appeared, and were, indeed, eagerly brought forward by the judge; but not a single witness in His defence was called, though the law gave such witnesses the preference. No Baal-Rib—or counsel—was assigned Him, nor were any facilities provided, or even the possibility offered, for His calling witnesses in His favour. The "court," from the first, sought to condemn; not as the law required, to acquit. There was no attempt, as was usual, to ascertain the trustworthiness of the hostile evidence, nor any warning, beforehand, to those who gave it, of the moral and legal offence of untruthfulness. So keenly, indeed, has the judicial murder of Jesus been felt by the Jewish nation, in later times, that the doctrine was afterwards invented in the Talmud, that any one who gave Himself out as a false Messiah, or who led the people astray from the doctrines of their fathers, could be tried and condemned the same day, or in the night. Yet in contradiction to this the monstrous fable was, also, coined, that a crier called aloud, for forty days, before Christ's condemnation, for witnesses in His favour to come forward.

If we try to discover by what law it was possible to condemn Jesus legally, it will be found, that, provided He could not be proved guilty of some civil crime, there were no written laws whatever to which Caiaphas and His assessors could appeal against Him. The Old Testament had not anticipated the case of any one calling Himself the Messiah, whether in a national or spiritual sense, and the charges so often made against Jesus, of having broken the laws of the Sabbath, even if He could not have defended Himself against them, were not punishable, by the laws of the day, with death. The grounds on which the theocracy could press for a capital conviction

lay wholly outside the law of Moses, and even of those expansions and modifications of it which formed the current law. A pretext had to be invented for the course taken. His real offence was that the Church authorities felt He was diffusing a spiritual influence, which, if left to develop and spread, would inevitably undermine the corrupt theocracy, and with it, their own power and worldly interests. To gain a brief respite, they were bent on putting Him to death, though His lofty purity of life and morals far transcended the highest ideals hitherto known, and His divine goodness was altogether unique. They did not see that, to kill Him, was only to hasten the ruin of the cause they sought to uphold.

But His spiritual glory remained hidden to their wilful blindness, and the shadow into which it threw their own shortcomings roused only fanatical rage. There remained nothing, therefore, since they could bring no capital charge recognized in the Law, against Him, except to feign horror as Jews, at the presumption of one so much below them in worldly station, raising Himself above the divinely revealed laws of Moses, and even claiming equality with God; and as hypocritical friends of the Roman, whom they in reality hated intensely, to pretend indignation and fear at the popular disturbance and disloyalty to the Emperor, which they affected to believe would result from His claim as Messiah King. Only on this last ground could they secure the indispensable assistance of Roman power, to put Him to death.

Caiaphas now, at last, had his enemy face to face. He would let Him feel what it was to denounce the priesthood as He had done, and to hold them up to the obloquy of the nation, as careless of the charge entrusted to them, by His taking it on Himself to interfere with their Temple jurisdiction, in His puritanical "cleansing" of the sacred enclosures. He had brought no end of odium on them, by the contrast between His zeal in this matter, and their alleged neglect, in allowing so-called abuses. The fanatical reformer who would turn the world upside down, was now standing, bound, before him, and he had Him at his mercy. The rest of the self-constituted judges had their own injuries to avenge, for had not they, the Scribes and Pharisees,—teachers of the nation,—been held up to contempt, as unsparingly as the knot of high-caste Sadducees? Caiaphas had long made up his mind what to do. The form of a trial might be necessary, but the result was determined beforehand. He had already counselled both Sadducees and Pharisees, to lay aside mutual disputes, and unite against Jesus, as one who endangered their common interests, and to sacrifice Him without hesitation. Policy, he had urged, demanded that He be at once put to death, to prevent His overthrowing the whole ecclesiastical constitution, with which their welfare and dignity were identified. The sentence was thus proclaimed before Caiaphas took his seat that night; the judge had already openly said that he intended to condemn. The whole pro-

ceedings were, in fact, simply a smooth hypocrisy, to secure the necessary aid of the Roman executioner.

Deadly enemies at other times, the "court" were now on the most amiable terms with each other, in their anxiety to hunt down the common foe. The proceedings began by Caiaphas, as he glanced fiercely at his prisoner, asking Him various questions respecting His disciples and His teaching: Why he gathered so many followers? What He had meant by sending them through Galilee and Judea, announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God? Why, a few days before, at His entrance to the city, He had allowed the crowds to hail Him as the Messiah? What He meant by the kingdom of the Messiah, and why He did not formally and publicly proclaim Himself as such?

Jesus carefully avoided any allusion to His disciples in His answer, for to have referred to them might have brought them into danger. As to Himself, the questions needed no inquiry; the matter spoke for itself. "I have taught frankly and without reserve," said He; "I have no secret doctrines; I have spoken everything I had to teach, publicly, in the synagogues and schools of the land, before friends and enemies; and here in Jerusalem, in the Temple, where I had for hearers the people assembled from all parts. I have taught nothing secretly,—nothing except in these public places. Why do you ask me? ask some of the multitudes who have heard me. They know what I have said to them, and what they say will seem to you more impartial than any words of mine. The Law requires that witnesses should first be examined in any trial."

But an honest and formal inquiry of this kind, though necessary by the Law, was no part of the plan of Caiaphas and his assessors. They sought only to get Jesus handed over to the Romans, as soon as possible; that He might be beyond the hope of rescue, when the people, among whom He had so many supporters, awoke in the morning. That He should dare to direct the high priest as to his duty, and should presume to throw on the court the rightful task of proving His guilt, was a fresh offence, and provoked fierce looks and angry words from the bench. The defence was at once rudely interrupted, for one of the turnkeys standing by, whether of his own accord, because he saw the feeling of the judges, or at a hint from Hannas or Caiaphas, in utter violation of judicial rules, or common decency, forthwith struck the prisoner on the mouth, with his hand, to silence Him. "Answerest thou the high priest thus boldly?" said he. Nothing could have pleased the bench better, and they did not attempt to rebuke the offender. It failed, however, to disturb the calm self-possession and dignity of Jesus. "If I have spoken what is false," He replied, "prove that I have done so, but if what I say be right, why do you strike me violently thus? No one has a right to take the law in his own hands, much less a servant of the court."

The appeal to the known and established forms of trial had not been lost. Hostile witnesses had already been sought to bring home to Jesus, if possible, some charge of false doctrine, or seditious language, but none had been found. The only evidence to be had would not suffice, even in such an assembly, to establish a capital charge of which the Romans would take cognizance. There were many, doubtless, who had heard Him use language which had given the Rabbis offence,—such as, "Thy sins are forgiven thee;"—words regarded as blasphemy, and, as such, punishable with death, by Jewish law; but they wanted to condemn Him on a charge punishable by Roman law. They had tried by spies, for months back, to draw from Him something they could twist into an attack on the national religion, or the Roman government, but had failed. It was hard to get a tolerable pretext for condemning Him.

Such evidence as they had was now however brought forward, in the hope that it would at least prove Him to be "a deceiver of the people," stirring them up, and exciting them against the laws of Moses, as defined by the Rabbis. But it was a fundamental rule of Jewish jurisprudence, that condemnation could only follow the concurrent testimony of, at least, two witnesses. Some, however, who came forward, had nothing relevant to say, and others contradicted themselves. His last discourses were, doubtless, the special crime in the eyes of His accusers. Little could be said about His ovation on entering Jerusalem, except that He had not refused it, nor was even the expulsion of the buyers and sellers from the Temple brought up, for the spirit that dictated it was evidently noble, however the act itself might be challenged. The strong invectives against the collective hierarchy offered a safer ground for accusation. Unfortunately for the judges, suitable witnesses were not to be found. At the best those who came forward garbled, or misunderstood the words of Jesus; as the hierarchy themselves afterwards, before Pilate, twisted those respecting the tribute money into a directly opposite sense. But even thus, the testimony amounted to nothing. Time was passing dangerously fast, without anything done.

At last, one witness appeared, who alleged that he had heard Jesus say, "Pull down this Temple, it is only the work of man, and I will, in three days, build another, not made with hands." Others agreed that He had said words which seemed intended to bring the Temple into contempt; an offence so grave that it was afterwards made a capital charge against the first martyr, Stephen, that he had "spoken blasphemous words against this holy place;" but their statements did not tally, and their witness was therefore worthless.

Meanwhile, Jesus had stood silent. Even to charges so hateful to Jewish ears as contempt of the Temple, He had made no answer. He knew it would be idle to speak before such a tribunal, and kept a dignified silence. To the judges, on the other hand, they seemed of the greatest weight. Caiaphas—a true inquisitor—could no longer

preserve official calmness. Springing from his couch, and standing up in front of it, he demanded if Jesus had nothing to say in His own defence, against all this. What did His silence mean? Was it a confession of guilt? But He still remained silent. The matter spoke for itself; the testimony given against Him was discordant and worthless. If His past life could not secure His acquittal, mere words were useless. To use His own earlier saying they would be pearls cast before swine, who would turn again and rend Him. Self-conscious and kingly, He bore Himself with a dignity that impressed even His judges. He would let violence and falsehood run their course. He would not recognize the tribunal, nor do honour to its members, for He knew that they were determined that He should die, innocent or guilty, to serve their own ends.

Caiaphas might have closed the examination at this point, and have taken the votes of the Commission. But with quick, hypocritical acuteness, he felt that the charge best sustained was an offence only in Jewish eyes; that the evidence in support of it was open to criticism, and that the silence of the prisoner might not, after all, be an admission of guilt. His pride, moreover, was touched by such a bearing towards himself, the primate, and he would force an answer, if possible, to save his own dignity. It would, besides, be better to go no further into matters which might protract the sitting, and spoil the plot, by letting morning return before Jesus was in the safe hands of the Romans. True to the serpent-cunning of the house of Hannas, he determined to bring things to a head by making Him, if possible, compromise Himself at once with Jewish opinion, and Roman fears. He hoped to worm out what could be distorted into a civil offence, for his keen knowledge of men told him, that, while fitly silent and dignified hitherto, his prisoner would give a frank reply, and reveal His secret thoughts when honour demanded it. For He was evidently about to die, as He had been charged with living, an enthusiast and zealot.

Looking straight at the accused, the mitred hypocrite, in his white robes, with practised official solemnity went at once to the heart of the matter, by the demand, uttered in Aramaic, the common speech of the Jewish courts as of the nation, "I put you on your oath by the living God, whose curse falls on those who swear falsely by Him, and require you to tell us whether you are the Malcha Meschicha—the King Messiah—the Son of God—Ever Blessed?"

The long foreseen moment had come, when an open claim which He had hitherto left to be inferred from His acts and figurative expressions, rather than openly stated, would bring on Him swift sentence of death. Caiaphas knew that many believed Him to be the Messiah; that He Himself had not refused the awful name, but had, rather, in His discourses, justified its being given Him; and that, a days before, He had allowed the thousands of Galilæan pilgrims, who greeted His entrance to Jerusalem, to salute Him by it. But the

ecclesiastical authorities had decided that He neither was, nor could be, the Messiah, and hence, in their eyes, His claiming openly to be so would be a *crimen læsæ majestatis*—blasphemous high treason, against the true Sovereign of the Land—Jehovah. He had hitherto evaded a direct answer, except in rare cases, because the time had not yet come for His openly declaring Himself. To have done so before all hope of longer life was passed, would have been to cut short His public work in founding His Kingdom.

But the supreme moment had now arrived. With kingly dignity, in the face of certain death for His words, and in solemn answer to the appeal to "the living God" as to their truth, Jesus calmly replied to the adjuration:—"If I tell you, ye will not believe, and if I ask questions that would prove my highest claims you would not answer. Thou hast said the Truth—I AM the Malcha Meschicha—the King Messiah—the Son of God, and Son of Man. In my present guise ye will see me no more; but when ye have slain me, I, the Son of Man, will forthwith sit on the right hand of the Majesty of God, and when ye see me next it will be sitting there, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

This declaration might have seemed sufficiently explicit, but the excitement of the judges, true Orientals, had grown ungovernable. Rising on their cushions, one and all demanded, with loud voices, "Art Thou, then, the Son of God?" "You have said it," replied Jesus, "AND I AM."

Caiaphas had gained his end. Hearing witnesses would have required time, and the whole scheme would have miscarried, if Jerusalem woke and the Galilæan pilgrims learned, while a rescue was still possible, the secret arrest, through the night, of their fellow-countryman, whom many of them esteemed a prophet of Jehovah, if not the very Messiah.

Caiaphas played his part well. Quivering with passion, and triumphant at his success, he forgot the practised coldness of the Sadducee, and once more springing from his couch with well-feigned horror at the words of Jesus, though they were precisely what he had wished, rent the bosom of his priestly robe of fine linen, as if it were too narrow to let him breathe, after hearing such blasphemy. He forgot that it was the worst of blasphemy for his own lips to use the name of Jehovah as a mere cloak for crime and wickedness! Jesus had spoken with the calmness of truth and innocence. He had applied to Himself words of Daniel, and of the Psalms, universally understood of the Messiah, and had predicted His sitting henceforth with Jehovah on the throne of heaven, and descending in divine majesty to judge the earth, though, while He spoke, He was at the very threshold of a shameful death.

"He has blasphemed!" cried Caiaphas. "What need is there to hear more witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy from His own lips. He gives Himself out as the true Messianic Son of God, which

we have already decided He is not. What seems good to you, my colleagues?"

In an irregular, illegal, self-constituted court, whose members had already approved the cold-blooded counsel of Caiaphas, to put the prisoner out of the way, guilty or innocent; and thus quench the fire He had kindled, in His own blood, no evidence or want of it could have secured an acquittal. Too many private and class grudges, and too many vested rights, lent weight to any pretext for a judicial murder. The very humility and the purely spiritual aims of Jesus were, themselves, a deadly offence; for their Jewish pride flattered itself that the Messiah would wield supernatural powers to restore the old Theocracy, and make Israel the head of the nations instead of hated Rome. Then, was He not a Galilæan—one of a race they despise l? It might be true that He wrought miracles, but one who wilfully broke the Law, as He openly did, by Sabbath healing—and *who* knew what else?—must work them by help from Beelzebub, not Jehovah.

And, besides, had not the high priest told them that it was no great harm if a single man were put out of the way, even if innocent, for the common good? When, moreover, did ferocious bigotry fail to identify its cry for blood with pious zeal for the glory of God?

All voted that further investigation was useless: that on His own confession Jesus was worthy of death.

They had, at last, their wish. All charges affecting the Temple, or Judaism, would have raised only the contemptuous laugh of the Roman procurator. But now that Jesus had claimed to be the Messiah, He could be represented to Pilate as a State criminal, delivered up for an attempt against the imperial rights of Tiberius.

The formal, preliminary examination was over, but its result needed to be confirmed by a larger gathering of the hierarchy. It was about three o'clock in the morning, and some hours must elapse before the sentence could be formally ratified.

Meanwhile, Jesus was left in charge of the rough Temple police, while the judges separated for an hour or two of sleep. There was nothing, now, to restrain the coarse natures to whom the condemned prisoner had been consigned. One under sentence of death was always, in these rough ages, the sport and mockery of his guards, and those in charge of Jesus, made worse than common by the example of the judges, vented their cruelty on Him with the coarsest brutality. Their passions, indeed, intensified their bitterness, for they were fierce Jewish bigots. He was to die as a false prophet, and as such they treated Him, racking their ingenuity to invent insult and injury. Having blindfolded Him, some struck Him violently on the head with their fists, or perhaps with the vine-stick, which Roman centurions and other officials carried as their sign of rank, and were wont to use on the face or head of the soldiers; for some of the captors of Jesus had such staves with them—others struck Him with their open hands, while still others, adding the greatest indignity an Oriental

could offer, spat in His face; crying, as they insulted and tortured Him,—"Prophesy to us, thou Messiah, who was it that did it?" The hands they had bound had healed the sick, and raised the dead; the lips they smote had calmed the winds and the waves. One word, and the splendours of the Mount of Transfiguration would have filled the chamber; one word, and the menials now sporting with him at their will would have perished. But, as He had begun and continued, He would end—as self-restrained in the use of His awful powers on His own behalf as if He had been the most helpless of men. Divine patience and infinite love knew no wearying. He had but to will it and walk free, but He came to die for man, and He would do it.

While His examination had been proceeding, the central court, which seems to have been paved, was the waiting place of the servants of the several judges, and of the underlings of the high priest and the Temple watch. John and Peter, recovering from their first panic, and anxious to see what became of their Master, had followed at a distance, till He was brought to the house of Caiaphas. The door of the outer court, or porch, had been closed, to prevent the entrance of any one likely to spread an alarm and bring about a rescue, but John, happening to be known to the household, or, perhaps, to the high priest himself, was readily admitted. Meanwhile, Peter remained shut out, but at John's solicitation was presently admitted by the maid who kept the door.

A fire of wood kindled in the open court in the chilly April night, had attracted all round it, Peter among the rest, by its cheerful blaze. He sat, with weary heart, by the light, wondering what the end would be, and not without alarm for his own safety, in case he should be recognized, and charged with his violence in the garden. Meanwhile, the door-keeper, who, perhaps, had seen him in attendance on Jesus in the Women's Court of the Temple, sauntered, like others, to the fire, and with a woman's abruptness, after gazing at him steadily, put the question directly to him—"Art thou, also, one of this man's disciples?" Confused and off his guard, he said nothing, but she would not let him go. "Thou, also, wast with Jesus of Galilee," she continued—repeating to those round her, "Certainly this man, also, was with Him." "Woman," said Peter, stammering out the words in mortal terror for his life, "I do not know Him; I do not know what you mean." But his conscience was ill at ease, and his fears grew apace. He could no longer hide his confusion, and went off into the darkness of the porch. His inexorable inquisitor would not, however, let him escape. He had hardly come to the light again, after a time, when she once more scanned him, and, determined to justify herself, began to speak of him to the serving men and slaves. "He *is* one of them. He *was* with Jesus of Nazareth." Irritated and alarmed, and losing all presence of mind, he repeated his denial with an oath. "I do not know the man. I am not one of His disciples. I swear I am not."

His stout assertions gave him an hour's respite and peace, but his troubles were not over, for the maid had fixed attention on him, and his bearing had excited suspicion. At last, one of the slaves of the high priest, a kinsman of the wounded Malchus, renewed the subject by asking Peter directly—"Did I not see thee, as I was standing at the door of the garden, just as they were coming out?" "You never did," said Peter. "I was not there." "Why, your very speech shows that you are of them—you *were* with Him," cried angry, fierce voices, "you are a Galilæan—we hear it in your words."

Peter, now, lost all control of himself. He had tried to strengthen his last denial by a solemn oath, but now burst into curses and imprecations on himself, if he had not spoken truth, in saying that he knew nothing whatever about Jesus! In the midst of his excitement the sound of a cock-crow fell on his ears, and at the sound, his Master, still before His murderers, in a room opening into the courtyard, turned andl ooked him full in the face, with those loving, but now no less reproachful eyes, in the light of which Peter had so long found his sweetest joy.

It was enough. The glance, like lightning, revealing an abyss, brought back to its nobler self the honest heart that for a time had been alarmed into superficial unfaithfulness, and threw an awful brightness into the depths of sin on whose edge he stood. All his unmanly weakness and wretched fear rose in his thoughts, and, with them, the remembrance of his boastings, so miserably belied. Christ's words, which he had so warmly repudiated—that, before the cock crew, he would deny Him thrice, had come true. What a contrast between the grand strength of his Master and his own weakness!

Shame and sorrow; mingled, on the moment, with a yearning hope of forgiveness, overpowered him, and he did, now, what he should have done earlier; went out, and wept bitterly. It is a touching and beautiful tradition, true to the sincerity of his repentance, if not as a historical reality, that, all his life long, the remembrance of this night never left him, and that, morning by morning, he rose at the hour when the look of his Master had entered his soul, to pray once more for pardon.

Towards the close of the fourth watch, and before daybreak, the heads of the theocracy, true to precedent, which required that the whole Sanhedrim, while it existed, should meet to ratify a sentence of death, had extemporized a semblance of the old High Court of the Nation in some suitable building. Thither Jesus was now led, under escort of Temple police and retainers of the high priest; to appear before the notables of Israel. The chiefs of the priestly courses, and other dignitaries of the Temple, with a number of elders and Rabbis, had gathered in the fading darkness, old though most of them were, to take part in the condemnation of the Hated One. The proceedings were, however, only formal; to hear the sentence of the Com-

mission and to endorse it. This done, the way was clear for handing Him over to Pilate.

In the eyes of those who, thus, unanimously confirmed the fatal sentence, He was a criminal of the worst dye; for, in their opinion, He had blasphemed with audacious boldness, by claiming to be the King Messiah, the Son of God, the long-expected deliverer of the nation, sent to it from heaven. No one had ever before laid claim to the sacred name, for, though many Messiahs rose in later years, no one, as yet, had assumed the tremendous dignity. Proof more than enough to establish His highest claims, offered itself in His life, and words, and works, but passion and prejudice had hardened their hearts, and blinded their judgments. The worst among them would never have dared to proceed against Him, had they believed Him really the Messiah. "I know," says St. Peter, "that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers." But it was the ignorance that had refused the light. Had they been honest and honourable, the first point to have been settled would have been, at least to hear what the Accused had to say in His own favour. They had constituted themselves the vindicators of the Law and the Prophets, and it was their elementary duty to hear the Prisoner's exposition of the statements of both, respecting the matter in hand. He had owned Himself the Messiah, and for doing so, without giving Him the opportunity of supporting His claim, they voted the sentence of death, by noisy acclamation. Law and tradition demanded a second full hearing of the case, but they thrust both aside, in their zeal to get Him condemned.

CHAPTER LXII.

BEFORE PILATE.

THE decision of the Jewish authorities having been duly signed and sealed, and Jesus once more securely bound, He was led off, strongly guarded from rescue, to the official residence of Pilate, on Mount Zion. It was still early, but Eastern life anticipates the day, for the heat of noon requires rest during the hours busiest with us. The way ran from the West Hall of the Temple over the Tyropœon by a bridge, and across the open space of the Xystus, with its pillared porches. The palace of Herod, now Pilate's headquarters, lay just beyond—the proud residence of the Roman knight who held the government for the Emperor Tiberius. It was inhabited for only a few weeks or days at a time, but now, during the Passover, the Procurator took care to be present; to repress, at once, any popular movement for national freedom, which the spring air, the feast itself, and the vast gathering of the nation, might excite.

Now, for the first time, Jesus entered the gates of a king's palace; the home of "men in soft raiment"—entered it as a prisoner. He

was to stand before a man who has come down to us as one of the most unrighteous, cruel, arbitrary, and hateful; a man rightly named Pilate—the "Javelinman"—for it seemed his delight to launch cruelties and scorns on every side, like javelins, among the oppressed people. What had Jesus to expect from one who hated the nation from his soul, and sported with their lives and possessions as if they were not men, but a lower race of despised slaves and fanatical Helots? It might, indeed, be of benefit to Him that the hatred of Pilate towards the Jews, might regard Him as a welcome instrument, in the absence of a better, for playing off his bitterness against them and their leaders. To favour a man who was in opposition to them, was, itself, a pleasure. Calm, temperate, and impartial, compared to Jewish passion and bitterness, and in some respects in sympathy with the accused, the hard, proud, heathen Roman was more open to the impression of Christ's innocence or harmlessness than the Jews or their leaders.

That he did not permanently protect Him, rose, partly, from his character, and, partly, from his past history as procurator. Morally enervated and lawless, the petty tyrant was incapable of a strong impression or righteous firmness, and, besides, he dreaded complaints at Rome, from the Jewish authorities, and insurrections of the masses in his local government. He had, in the past, learned to fear the unconquerable pertinacity of the Jews and the rebukes of the Emperor, so keenly, that he would permit, or do, almost anything, for quiet. This showed itself in his bearing towards Jesus. Protecting Him for a time, half in sympathy, half in mockery, he gave Him up in the end, rather than brave the persistent demand of a people he hated and feared. He would have set Him free, but for the popular clamour, and a bitter remembrance of the trouble it had already given him in Jerusalem and at Rome.

There was a hall in the palace, in which trials were generally conducted, but the Jewish notables, who had condemned Jesus, were much too holy to enter a heathen building during the feast, since there might be old leaven in it. It was Friday, and the Sabbath began that night, and in the evening there was universally at this season a supplementary feast of priests and people, on the flesh of the freewill offerings. It had, for centuries, been associated with the Passover and was thought a part of it, and Levitical uncleanness would prevent the accusers taking part in it. They were still true to the character given them by Jesus; careful of the outside of the bowl and platter, but willing that, within, it should be filled with wickedness. They had effected their end. Jesus was in the hands of the Romans, before Jerusalem awoke.

Knowing the people with whom he had to do, Pilate made no attempt to overcome their scruples. Trials in the open air were common, for Roman law courted publicity, Roman governors, and the half Roman Herod and his sons, erected their tribunals, indifferently,

before the palace, in the market-place, in the theatre, in the circus, or, even, in the highways. Pilate, therefore, caused his official seat to be set down on a spot known, in Jerusalem, as Gabbatha—the high place,—from its being raised above the crowd, and as "The Pavement," because it was laid, according to Roman custom, where judges sat, with a mosaic of coloured stones. It was, very possibly a permanent erection, square, or of crescent shape, of costly marble, in keeping with the splendour so dear to Herod, its builder; projecting from the front of the "Judgment Hall," in the palace, and easily accessible by a doorway from it. It was a maxim of Roman law that all criminal trials should be held on a raised tribunal, that all might see and be seen.

The ivory curule chair of the procurator—his seat of state, and sign of office; or, perhaps, the old golden seat of Archelaus, was set down on the tesselated floor of the tribunal, which was large enough to let the assessors of the court—Roman citizens—who acted as nominal members of the judicial bench, sit beside Pilate—for Roman law required their presence. On lower elevations, sat the officers of the court, friends of the procurator, and others whom he chose to honour.

The priests and elders who appeared against Jesus, now led Him up the steps of the tribunal, to the procurator, and set Him before him. Seats were generally provided for the accusers near the judge, and there was, also, usually, a seat for the accused; but in Judea, despised and insulted, this custom was not now observed, at least so far as regarded Jesus, for He had to stand through the trial. An interpreter was not needed, as the Jewish officials doubtless spoke Greek, and Jesus, brought up in Galilee, where the presence of foreigners made its use general, necessarily understood it. A strong detachment of troops from the garrison guarded the tribunal, and kept the ground, for a vast crowd of citizens and pilgrims speedily gathered, as the news of the arrest spread.

Roman law knew nothing of the inquisitorial system by which a prisoner might be forced to convict himself; it required that a formal accusation of a specific offence should be made against him. This office of accuser, Caiaphas, dispensing with the customary employment of an "orator," himself, apparently, performed, as the representative of the nation, and its highest dignitary; to give the charges the greater weight.

Pilate, having taken his seat, began the proceedings by formally asking Caiaphas and his colleagues what accusation they had against the prisoner.

"If He had not been a great offender," replied Caiaphas, as spokesman, "we would not have delivered Him up to thee. We have power enough to punish ordinary offenders, by our own laws, but this man's crime goes beyond our powers in the punishment it demands, and, therefore, we have handed Him over to you. That we have done so, I submit, is proof that He deserves death. The pres-

ence of myself, the high priest, and of the notables of the nation, as His accusers, may suffice to prove the blackness of His guilt."

Pilate was not a stranger in Palestine, and had, doubtless, had Jesus already under his notice, through reports of his spies and officials. He had learned that He avoided all appeals to force; that His discourses had nothing whatever political in them, and that His zeal was mainly directed against the corruptions of the Jewish priesthood and public teachers, whom the Romans themselves despised for the same cause. The immense crowds that had followed Him, at His first appearance in Judea, three years before, and His subsequent course in Galilee, must have been the subject of many official communications to Cæsarea, Pilate's usual residence; and they had uniformly represented Him as peaceful and harmless. Pilate knew, therefore, that He was now delivered up by the priests and Rabbis only from envy, and for their own selfish ends. From all he had learned, Jesus was only a well-meaning enthusiast, and He could easily see how such a man might well be dangerous to the vested interests and mock holiness of the Jewish magnates, but not at all so to Roman authority. He was ready enough to quench in blood any religious movement that threatened the peace, but he saw no ground for apprehension as regarded this one.

The Gospels give only a brief outline of the whole trial, but even the opening address of Caiaphas, or the orator who spoke for him and his colleagues, was, no doubt, full of rhetorical compliments to Pilate himself, and of fierce words against the prisoner. It had, however, a very different effect on Pilate from that intended. The hypocritical clamour for blood by a priesthood whom he despised as Jews, and, still more, for their superstition, bigotry, barbarous want of taste and culture, restless greed, and restive opposition to Rome, was hateful and repulsive. He would not involve his court, which represented the majesty of the Emperor, in any further details of a question about one who seemed a mere religious reformer. The accusers had, themselves, jurisdiction in their own religious disputes.

Interrupting the speaker, therefore, Pilate told him—"If you have found Him what you say, you had better, in my opinion, take Him, and judge Him according to your own law." If they did not trouble him further, he would not interfere with them. He had not, as yet, understood that they sought to have Jesus put to death, but fancied they wished some other punishment.

Caiaphas had his answer ready. "It is a *criminal* charge," said he, "a charge of capital crime, and we cannot put any one to death, without your confirming our sentence." He could not, however, confirm any sentence, without, at least, a summary investigation, and, thus, the matter must proceed before him. They might have stoned Jesus for blasphemy, had he sanctioned their doing so, but they were resolved to leave the odium of the murder on him, and have their victim crucified. In the fulfilment of the divine counsels,

He was to die, not as a martyr to Jewish fury, but as a sin-offering, on the Cross.

"What is your accusation then?" asked Pilate.

Craftily keeping out of sight Christ's declaration that He was the Son of God, because such a theological question was indifferent to the Roman, and because heathenism had no such ideas connected with the phrase as Judaism, Caiaphas turned the religious offence into a political one. The "Son of God," in a Jewish sense, was equivalent to the Messiah, the expected national deliverer, and, hence, he created out of the claim, a pretension to earthly royalty. Such an accusation could not be overlooked, and must wake prejudice, if believed, as involving a charge of treason against the suspicious and relentless Tiberius. The priests expected an instant condemnation, for they knew Pilate's hyæna-like nature.

Roman law permitted the questioning of a prisoner after formal accusation, and confession of the charge was held sufficient proof of guilt.

"The accused has been condemned by us as a deceiver of the people," answered the high priest.

"How?" asked Pilate.

"In a double way," said Caiaphas. "He stirs up the nation against paying their tribute to Cæsar, and He sets himself up as king of the Jews. He says He is the Messiah, which is the name we give our king, and He has led many to regard Him as a descendant of David, and our only lawful sovereign."

Jesus was standing at Pilate's side. Rising from his chair and ordering Him to be brought after him, he retired into the palace, and calling Jesus before him, asked Him—"Art *Thou* the king of the Jews? Dost Thou, really, claim to be so?" He evidently expected a disavowal, for he felt it almost beneath him to ask such a question of one, in his eyes, so utterly unlike a king. Had he been firm and strong-minded, he would have seen the groundlessness of the charge, from the absence of all overt proof, but he weakly proceeded to compromise himself, by putting Jesus to examination.

Knowing that Pilate had nothing against Him but the words of His enemies outside, Jesus, with a calm dignity that must have amazed the procurator, asked him a counter question. "Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others told it you of me?" He would have Pilate remember the more than doubtful source of the accusation, and that with all his official means of information, no grounds of such a charge had ever suggested themselves to his own mind. It was, besides, essential to know if he spoke as a Roman, with a political use of the title "king," or repeated it in the Jewish sense, as equivalent to "the Messiah."

"Do you think *I* am a *Jew?*" answered Pilate, scornfully, feeling his false position, in entertaining an accusation from so suspicious a source. "Your own nation have brought you before me; the

charge comes from the priests and Rabbis. I have only repeated their accusation. What do I care for your dreams about a Messiah? Tell me, what have you done? Do you call yourself the king of the Jews?"

"In your sense of the word I am not a king," answered Jesus, "but in another, I am. My accusers expect a mere earthly, world-conquering Messiah. But my Kingdom is not of this world—not earthly and political, If it were, my attendants would have fought for me, to prevent my being arrested and delivered up to my enemies by the soldiers you sent against me. But they made no resistance nor any attempt even to rescue me, and this, of itself, is enough to show that my Kingdom is not a political one."

"You speak of a kingdom: are you really a king, then, in any *other* sense than the common?" asked the procurator, awed before the Mysterious Man.

"Thou sayest it; so it is: I AM A KING," answered Jesus. "I was born to be a King; I came into the world that I should bear witness for The Truth." He spoke in His lofty, mystic way of the divine Truth He had seen and heard in a former existence, when in the bosom of the Father. "All who love and seek the Truth," he continued—"that is, who hear and obey my words—are my subjects." He had thrice claimed a Kingdom, and thrice told Pilate that it was not of this world.

"How these Jews talk!" thought Pilate. "They, barbarous as they are, think they have TRUTH as their special possession—TRUTH, which is a riddle insoluble to our philosophers! What have I to do with such speculations, fit only to confuse the head of a hungry Greek or a beggarly Rabbi?" But he had heard enough to convince him that Jesus had no thought of treason against Rome, or of stirring up a disturbance in the country. Hardened, cold, worldly, he felt how awful goodness is, and would fain have dismissed One so strangely different from other men—an enthusiast, willing to die to make men better! "What kind of a man is He?" thought the Roman. "If He only had not been so ready with His talk about being a king! But He will do nothing to help Himself!" "What is Truth?" said he, ironically, and turned away without waiting an answer, for in Pilate's opinion, as in that of most men of his class in that age, Truth was an airy nothing, a mere empty name.

Leaving Jesus to be brought out after him to the tribunal again, he returned to the accusers and the multitude. Touched by the prisoner's self-possession and dignity; half-afraid of one who spoke only of Truth, and of other worlds than this; and incensed that the hierarchy should, for their own ends, have sought to palm off a harmless enthusiast on him, as a dangerous traitor; he threw the priests and Rabbis into fierce confusion, by frankly telling them "that he had examined Jesus, and found no ground for any punishment in His thinking Himself the Messiah, as they called it." One point in

the accusation had failed, but it was necessary to hear what might be alleged besides. The accusers could easily see that, in spite of the admission of Jesus that He claimed to be a king, Pilate regarded him rather with pity than fear. More must be done, to fix on Him the crime of being dangerous to the State. The priests and Rabbis were greatly excited. One after another, they sprang up, with charge on charge, to confirm their main accusation. In their fierce bigotry and unmeasured hatred, they had not scrupled to speak of a purely religious movement as a dark political plot, and now they were bold enough even to adduce proofs of this treason. "He has perverted women and children, and has systematically stirred up the whole nation against Cæsar; from Galilee to Jerusalem there is not a town or village in the land, where He has not won over some, and filled them with wild expectations. He has appealed to the nation to join His Kingdom; He has spoken against paying the taxes; He is a second Judas the Gaulonite, and you know what *his* career has cost Rome, in blood and treasure." The hypocrites! They were hunting Jesus to death simply because He would not identify Himself with them, and use His supernatural power to drive out the Romans, and set them on the vacant throne. They were demanding His death on the pretext that He had threatened to use *force* to establish His Kingdom, when the truth was—His real offence, in their eyes, was that He would *not* use force!

Such a storm of accusations and suspicions might well have led Pilate to expect some denial or disproofs from Jesus. He doubtless attributed all the difficulty of the situation to His too ready admission of His dreamy kingship; and, on every ground, even for his own sake, to clear him from a business that grew more and more serious, hoped to hear some defence. But Jesus knew with whom He had to do. He knew that His enemies were determined that He should die, and would invent charge after charge till He was destroyed. They had already scrupled at nothing. He knew Pilate—fierce, and yet cowardly, with no moral force; the tyrant, and yet the sport of the Jewish authorities. The majesty of truth and goodness in Him looked down with a pitying disdain on the moral worthlessness of judge and accusers alike, and would not stoop to utter even a word in His own behalf, before them. They knew His life and work, and if the witness *they* bore were of no weight, He would add no other. "If *I* demand that He answer," thought Pilate, "perhaps He will do so." "Do you not hear," said he, "how many things they accuse you of? Do you make no defence at all?" But Jesus remained silent, not uttering even a word. "A very strange man," thought Pilate. He seemed to him more than ever a lofty enthusiast, blind to His own interests, and careless of life.

The word "GALILEE," in the wild cries of the priests and Rabbis, raised a new hope in Pilate's mind. Antipas was now in Jerusalem, at the feast. If Jesus were a Galilæan, it would be a graceful

courtesy to send Him to be tried, as a Galilæan, before His own prince, and would perhaps efface the grudge Antipas had at himself, for having let loose his soldiers lately on the Galilæan pilgrims in the Temple, during a disturbance, and by cutting some down, even at the altar:—a sore scandal in the Jewish world. It would, moreover, get him clear of a troublesome matter, and, perhaps, it might even save the strange man—so calm, so dignified, in circumstances of such weakness and humiliation; with such a look, as if He read one's soul; with such a mysterious air of greatness, even in bonds, and in the very face of death by the Cross. Antipas would not likely yield to the Temple party, as he himself might be forced to do, to avoid another complaint to Rome. He no sooner, therefore, heard that Jesus was a Galilæan, than he ordered Him to be transferred to Antipas, that he might judge Him as such.

The old palace of the Asmoneans, in which Antipas lodged, was a short way from Pilate's splendid official residence. It lay a few streets off, to the north-east, within the same old city wall, on the slope of Zion, the levelled crest of which was occupied by the vast palace of Herod, now the Roman headquarters. Both were in the old, or upper city, and through the narrow streets—with raised pathways, and middle sunk to prevent defilement to passers-by—Jesus was now led, under escort of a detachment of the Roman troops on duty. The accusers had no choice but to follow, and the multitude went off with them, for it was no ordinary spectacle, to see the high priest and all the great men of the city, thus, in public, together.

The vassal king was caught in Pilate's snare. The flattery of referring a Galilæan case to him as the Galilæan tetrarch, greatly pleased him, and his light superficial nature was no less gratified by having One of whom he had heard so much, brought before him. In his petty court, amidst all its affectation of grandeur and state, ennui hung like a drowsiness over all. He had never seen a miracle, and should like to be able to say he had. It would break the monotony of a day, and give an hour's languid talk. A prisoner, in danger of the Cross, could not refuse to humour him, if he commanded Him to perform one! He had been afraid of Jesus once, but a miracle-worker in chains, could be only, at best, a clever juggler.

Pilate had taken his seat on his tribunal in the grey dawn, and an hour had passed. It was shortly after six, when Antipas, early astir, like all Orientals, heard the commotion in the courtyard of his palace, and received word that Jesus had been handed over to his authority. A few minutes more, and the prisoner was led into the Court of Justice of the palace, and presently, Antipas made his appearance on the tribunal, on which Jesus was also forthwith placed.

The light, weak, crafty, worthless man, was disposed to be very condescending. He put question after question to Him; whatever his idle curiosity suggested; and doubtless asked that a miracle might be performed there and then. But Jesus was no conjuror or "magus."

He was ready to save His life by worthy means, but He would not, for a moment, stoop to anything unworthy. The creature clad in purple before Him was the murderer of John: the slave of a wicked woman; a mean adulterer; and would fain have had His life, as well as that of the Baptist. Jesus felt, therefore, only utter disdain for him, and treated him with withering silence. He might tire himself with questions, but not a word of reply would be vouchsafed. Antipas began to feel that it was no time to indulge his humour, and grew half-alarmed.

The high priests and Rabbis, Caiaphas at their head, would gladly have turned the annoyance of the tetrarch to their own account. When his questions had ceased, they broke out into vehement accusations, forgetful, in their rage, of either their office or their self-respect. But they, too, were met with the same insufferable, contemptuous silence, which gave no chance of fastening anything on their enemy, by any admission of His own. Antipas was no less at a loss what to do than Pilate had been. One thing, alone, he had resolved—he would have no part in condemning so mysterious a man. Was he afraid of the large following Jesus already had in Galilee? Was he spell-bound and awed by those eyes—that calmness—that more than kingly dignity? Was he afraid of the very power of which he had craved some exhibition? When there was no Herodias at hand to make him the tool of her revenge, he was rather a mere voluptuary than cruel.

Treated so strangely before his courtiers: humbled and baffled, Antipas covered his defeat and alarm, by an affectation of contemptuous ridicule. The harmless fanatical madman who claimed to be a king, would make a fine butt for the humour of his guard. Let them trick Him out as a king, and play at homage to Him, and see how He would bear His shadowy dignities! It was a brave chance for the courtiers to show their manliness by mocking a helpless prisoner! Antipas knew, by this time, Pilate's opinion of the accused, and suspected why he had sent Him. So, officer and common soldier set themselves to amuse their master, by trying their wit on this ridiculous pretender to a crown! Tired at last, nothing remained but to send Him back to Pilate, and let *him* finish what he had begun. Antipas had no desire to meddle further, in what might prove a very troublesome matter. Having, therefore, put a white robe—the Jewish royal colour, on Jesus—as if to show that he had no fear of such a king, he sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate had already made one vain attempt to save Him, and now, anxious to end the matter, summoned the accusers once more to the tribunal. A great crowd had gathered, mostly of citizens, hostile as such to the alleged enemy of the Temple by which they lived. Looking at Jesus again—standing before him in the humble dress of the people—for they had already stripped Him of His robe of mockery:—Pilate noticed that He showed no trace of fanaticism, in word,

bearing, or countenance; and felt more than ever convinced that He was no rebel or dangerous person. "I have examined this man," said he, "and nothing worthy of death has been done by Him. Still more, I sent Him to Herod, and he is of the same opinion, and he has sent Him again to me uncondemned. But since so much trouble has been caused by His fancies, He deserves some punishment. I shall, therefore, order Him to be scourged and then dismissed. It will be a warning to Him." His offer to scourge Him was a mean salve to the wounded pride of the hierarchy, for his refusing their demand for a sentence of death.

Meanwhile, a cry arose in the crowd, which was destined to have momentous results. It was the custom to carry out capital sentences at the Feast times, that the people, at large, might get a lesson; but, it was also the practice of the procurators, in compliment to the deliverance of Israel from the slavery of Egypt, commemorated by the Passover, to release any one prisoner condemned to death, whom the multitude might name in the Passover week.

Coming forward, therefore, and addressing both accusers and people, Pilate reminded them of their custom that he should release a prisoner, to them, at the Passover. Cries instantly rose, clamouring that he should do so, as he had always done, and for once the shouts pleased him; for he fancied that, this time, there could be no question who should receive the pardon. One who claimed to be their national king, and had attracted so much notice, would, he assumed, be gladly accepted. Coming forward, therefore, he called out to the people, whether they would like "Jesus, their king," to be the prisoner released to them that year.

It happened that, at this time, there lay, awaiting execution, one Barabbas—the son of a Rabbi—who had, apparently, been compromised through religious fanaticism, in one of the countless petty revolts which incessantly harassed the Romans. He was no common robber, but a zealot, who, in mistaken ardour for the honour of the Law, had taken part in a tumult, during which some Roman sympathizers or soldiers, had been killed.

The proposal of Pilate threatened to overthrow the scheme of the hierarchy, and, unless opposed on the instant, might catch the popular fancy, and be accepted. Caiaphas and his party, therefore, with quick presence of mind, determined to turn attention from it, by raising a counter proposal flattering to local passion. "Ask him to release Barabbas to you, and not this man," shouted they to the mob. It was a dexterous stroke, for Barabbas had been condemned for an offence which made him a martyr, in the eyes of the people. He had risen against the abhorred Roman. He was a patriot, therefore: a zealot for the Temple and the Law, while Jesus was the enemy of things as they were—of tradition and rites;—and demanded reforms. Caiaphas had no sympathy with the revolutionary fierceness of Barabbas, but it made him only too zealous on the right side, whereas

Jesus was the public accuser of the whole priesthood, and of the schools as well.

The cry for Barabbas was, therefore, raised by the high priests as a cue to the people, and repeated with such vehement urgency that, erelong, it was caught up by the whole crowd, who were presently wild with excitement to have "the patriot" released, instead of Jesus. The public opinion, or voice of a nation, when the result of free expression of opposite judgments, may be the voice of God, but the voice of the unthinking multitude, as the outburst of sudden passion or caprice, seems often that of Satan. Pilate was not required to give the people their choice, but had fancied he might appeal to them as against the priests and Rabbis, and have their approval, as a counterpoise to the opposition of their leaders, and a security for himself with the Emperor. But the high priests kept up the cry for Barabbas so fiercely, and, to Pilate's regret, the multitude echoed it with such a wild tumult of voices, that he saw he had failed. "Give us Barabbas," alone was heard. A popular tumult seemed rising. Everything promised another scene like that of the great deputation to Cæsarea, about the standards set up in Jerusalem, when the persistent cries of the multitude were not to be silenced, even by fear of death, and forced Pilate, in the end, to yield.

To add to the governor's perplexity, he had scarcely ascended the judge's seat to receive the decision of the people, and give his sentence in accord with it, when a message came to him from his wife, from the palace behind, which, under the circumstances, must have greatly impressed him. Since the time of Augustus, Roman magistrates had been permitted to take their wives to the provinces, and tradition has handed down the wife of Pilate—whose name it gives as Procla—as a proselyte to Judaism. She had evidently heard of Jesus, and, having taken a lively interest in Him, was greatly troubled at His arrest, and present danger. Her messenger, hastening to Pilate's ear, now whispered an entreaty from her, that he would have nothing to do with condemning this just man; she had suffered many things, through the night, in a dream, because of Him—and feared divine vengeance if He were condemned.

Pilate—guided only by expediency—was at a loss what to do. Unwilling to give way to the mob, and let loose a fierce enemy of Rome, instead of a harmless, and evidently lofty-minded enthusiast: certain that the high priests had accused Him only from envy at His influence with the people, and hatred of Him for His opposition to themselves: half afraid, moreover, especially after his wife's message, to meddle further in the matter—he, once more, turned to the crowd, who were still shouting—"Not this man, but Barabbas"—and attempted to carry his point, and save Jesus.

"Which of the two," cried he, "do you really wish me to release to you?" "Barabbas, Barabbas," roared the multitude. The cry raised by the priests had carried all before it. "What shall I do

then," asked Pilate, pale before the storm, "with Jesus, whom you call the Messiah—the King of the Jews?" He hoped that the sound of titles so dear to their hearts, and so flattering to their pride, would have some effect. But he was bitterly deceived.

For now, for the first time, rose in answer to him, the fearful words —"To the CROSS!" "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"—the priests and Rabbis—prelates and doctors of the nation—on the raised platform of the tribunal, shouting first, and the mob, below, presently re-echoing them far and wide.

Pilate had failed twice, but he still held out. Appealing a third time to the excited crowd, he strove to reason with them—

"Why shall I crucify him? What evil has He done? He has broken no law. I have found no cause, in anything He has done, to put Him to death. I will, therefore, only scourge Him and let Him go."

But he knew not the forces he was opposing. Behind the passions of the priests, and Rabbis, and people, were the slowly self-fulfilling counsels of the Eternal!

The sea of upturned faces broke into wild uproar, once more, and a thousand voices cried only, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

The six days of Cæsarea, when the same crowds had besieged his palace, with the unbroken cry, which not even imminent death could still—the six days, when their invincible tenacity had forced him to humble himself before them, and let them triumph—rose in Pilate's mind.

"It will be another uproar like that," thought he; "I must yield while I can, and save myself." Poor mockery of a ruler! Set by the Eternal to do right on earth, and afraid to do it: told so by his own bosom: strong enough in his legions, and in the truth itself, to have saved the Innocent One, and kept his own soul—he could only think of the apparently expedient. Type of the politician of all ages, who forgets that only the right is the strong or wise!

Not daring, in his weakness, to play the man, and do right, Pilate was yet determined that even those at a distance, who might not hear his disavowal of any willing share in the condemnation of Christ, should be made to see it. To wash the hands in water is a natural symbol, so expressive of repudiation of responsibility, that it had been adopted by Jews and heathen, alike. So long before as the days of Moses, the elders of a city, near which the body of a slain man had been found, were required to wash their hands over a slaughtered heifer, and declare their innocence. To wash the hands in innocency was already a common expression, in the days of David, and it was familiar to both Greeks and Romans. Calling, therefore, for water, Pilate went towards his official chair, and with significant gestures, washed his hands, calling aloud as he did so "that as his hands were clean before them, so was he himself, of all guilt in the blood of this man. It is on you; you may answer for it as you best can!"

"Yes! yes!" cried the furious priests and rabble, "willingly! we and our children will take the blame! His blood be on us and our children, if He be slain unjustly."

"Then you may have His blood," thought Pilate; "I have done my best to save Him!" So do men deceive themselves, as if they could wash their conscience clean as easily as their hands! They fancy they have done their utmost for their acknowledged duty, when they have not done precisely the first indispensable and decisive act. They weary themselves, toiling along a thousand crooked ways, which cannot lead them to their end, and turn aside only from the path of unhesitating, immovable, right—the way nearest to them, and the shortest, after all!

The Innocent One had gained nothing but evil by all the windings and doublings of the scheming and trimming Roman. Pilate had proposed as a compromise with His accusers, to save His life, by delivering Him over to the shame and agony of scourging, though He had, confessedly, done nothing amiss. He was, now, to be both scourged and crucified.

Victims condemned to the cross first underwent the hideous torture of the scourge, and this was, forthwith, inflicted on Jesus. Pilate, in person, commanded it to be carried out. "Go, bind His hands, and let Him be beaten," was the order for this terrible prelude to crucifixion.

Roman citizens were still exempted, by various laws, from this agonizing and painful punishment, which was employed sometimes to elicit confessions, sometimes as a substitute for execution, and, at others, as the first step in capital sentences. It was in full use in the provinces, and lawless governors did not scruple to enforce it even on Roman citizens, in spite of their protests that they were so. Jesus was now seized by some of the soldiers standing near, and, after being stripped to the waist, was bound in a stooping posture, His hands behind His back, to a post, or low pillar, near the tribunal. He was then beaten till the soldiers chose to stop, with knots of rope, or plaited leather thongs, armed at the ends with acorn-shaped drops of lead, or small, sharp-pointed bones. In many cases not only was the back of the person scourged, cut open in all directions: even the eyes, the face, and the breast, were torn and cut, and the teeth not seldom knocked out. The judge stood by, to stimulate the sinewy executioners, by cries of "Give it him"—but we may trust that Pilate, though his office required his presence, spared himself this crime.

Under the fury of the countless stripes, the victims sometimes sank, amidst screams, convulsive leaps, and distortions, into a senseless heap: sometimes died on the spot: sometimes, were taken away an unrecognizable mass of bleeding flesh, to find deliverance in death, from the inflammation and fever, sickness and shame.

The scourging of Jesus was of the severest, for the soldiers employed as lictors, in the absence of these special officials, who were not

allowed to procurators, only too gladly vented on any Jew the grudge they bore the nation, and they would, doubtless, try if *they* could not force out the confession, which His silence had denied to the governor. Besides, He was to be crucified, and the harder the scourging the less life would there be left, to keep them on guard at the cross, afterwards. What He must have endured is pictured to us by Eusebius in the epistle of the Church in Smyrna. "All around were horrified to see them (the martyrs)," says he, "so torn with scourges that their very veins were laid bare, and the inner muscles and sinews, and even the very bowels, exposed."

The scourging over—Pilate, as his office required, standing by, to hear any confession that might be made,—Jesus was formally delivered over to a military officer with the authorization to see Him crucified. He had been scourged in the open grounds before the palace gate, close to the tribunal, but was now led, still half-naked, with painful, bleeding steps, into the inner court of the palace, in which, as the trial was over, the whole cohort—no longer needed outside—was massed, to be ready for any attempt at rescue. His guards now put some of His clothes on the quivering body. For this His own humble under garments contented them, in part, but the brutal humour of the guard-room was free to vent itself on a condemned man, and the lofty claims of Christ, and His hated nationality, excited it to the keenest. Instead of His plain abba of linen, therefore, they threw over His shoulders a scarlet sagum, or soldier's cloak—as a rough burlesque of the long and fine purple one, worn only by the Emperor. One of them, running to the nearest open space, heightened the coarse and shameful merriment by bringing in some of the tough twigs of the thorny Nubk, which he twisted into a mock laurel wreath, like that worn at times by the Cæsars, and forced down, with its close sharp thorns, on our Saviour's temples. The Nubk even yet grows, on dwarf bushes, outside the walls of Jerusalem. A fit mockery of a sceptre, to complete the ridicule, was at hand, in one of the long reeds, used in many ways in Jewish houses, and hence easily procured. Placed in His hand, the mock king had a sceptre! It only remained to pay Him a show of homage, and this they did, with mock oaths of allegiance, on their knees, saluting Him, "Hail, King of the Jews." The courtyard rang with peals of laughter. Some of the more brutal could not, however, let things pass so lightly. He was a Jew; He had claimed to be a king, in opposition, as they fancied, to the Emperor, and He was about to be crucified. So they indulged their coarseness by tearing the stout cane-like reed from His Hands, and striking Him with it over the face and head. Others struck Him rudely with their fists: some, in their contempt, even spitting on Him as they did so. The scourging had lasted till the soldiers had pleased to end it, and now, their unspeakable brutality was left to wear itself out.

This long passage of insult and mockery was one of the sorest trials

of these last sad hours. Yet through the whole no complaint escaped His lips. He was being insulted, maltreated, and mocked, as a Jew, while already agonized by the scourging; but if His tormentors had known it, it was because the Jews hated Him He stood where He did. They ridiculed His claim to the monarchy of the world; but had the soldiery known the truth, it was because He had opposed the Jewish dream of such a monarchy that He was being put to death.

No murmur rose from Him. He might have spoken, or sighed, or implored the pity of the soldiery: He might have appealed to their honour and compassion. A heart beats even in the roughest bosom. But He was silent—silent, not because the waves of His sorrows had overwhelmed Him, but in triumphant superiority to them. He had been bowed and crushed in Gethsemane, but now, He showed the serene joy of a conqueror. His silence was a mark of His perfect child-like resignation to the will of His Father. He was fulfilling, by His calm endurance, the work of His life, in accordance with the eternal counsels of God, and in holy love for His nation and the world. His kingly spirit was clouded to human eyes by pain and agony, but the end of His life and death shone out ever more triumphantly before Him. He was dying to destroy for ever the dead and death-causing ritualism of the past; as the founder of a religion of love and freedom and light; and as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the world, which would open the gates of mercy to man for evermore!

Pilate had, apparently, retired into the palace for a time, but now reappeared; urged, perhaps, by his wife Procla, to make one more effort to save Jesus. He might have prevented the pitiful coarseness of the soldiers had he pleased, and the scourging itself was an injustice, by his own confession. He now ordered Him to be brought out once more, tottering with pain and weakness, wearing the scarlet cloak and the crown of thorns, and covered besides with the vile proofs of contempt and violence. Even the stony heart of Pilate was touched.

"Behold," said he, "I have brought Him out to you again, that you may know, once more, that I have found no fault in Him." Then, turning to the figure at his side, drawn together with mortal agony, and looking at the pale, worn, and bleeding face, through which there yet shone a calm dignity and more than human beauty that had touched his heart, and might touch even the heart of Jews, he added —"Behold the man!" Would they let the scourging and mockery suffice, after all?

But religious hatred is the fiercest of all passions. Jesus had been sleepless through the night, worn with anticipations of the terrible future, and with the sadness of an infinite sorrow; disfigured by the lawless treatment of the palace-yard, and bowed by the torture of the scourging; and now stood, utterly exhausted, before all eyes—yet a form demanding reverence.

But the priests were unmoved. What revenge would satisfy their hatred so long as still more could be had? The sight of their victim

redoubled their ferocity. Forgetful of their profession and dignity, the chief priests—the primate and prelates of the day—their servants and the servile crowd echoing their cry—answered the procurator's appeal only by loud shouts of "Crucify! crucify!"

"Take ye Him, then, and crucify Him, if it must be so," answered Pilate. "I have found Him blameless of any offence against Roman law for which I could condemn Him." As if he wished to say—"I will not be your mere tool!"

The first accusation had therefore failed, and was dropped. But the priests were determined to have His life, and forthwith demanded it on a new ground.

"He shall not escape with life!" cried their spokesman. "If He has committed no crime worthy of death by Roman law, we have a Jewish law which He has outraged, and by this law He must die. He has claimed to be the Son of God—the Messiah—which He is not, and for that, by our law, which we only can or dare decide, and which thou hast sworn to uphold, He deserves death;—death by stoning, in any case; death by the cross, if thou allowest it. Thou art bound to uphold our decision, and confirm our sentence."

Thousands were eager, now that the high priests had roused their fanaticism, to put Jesus to death, with Pilate's permission or without. The zealots would do it as a meritorious act. But such an outbreak Pilate dreaded. He would, therefore, have yielded without hesitation, but even to his frivolous soul there was an ominous sound in the name "Son of God." Might he be braving the wrath of the gods, and what, compared to that, was the utmost these wretched Jews could do?

The irresolute man—with no force of character, and too unprincipled to be an upright judge, if the right were not, first of all, politic—was alarmed. "Perhaps," thought he, "if he brought Jesus before him, privately, once more, a way out of the dilemma would present itself." There was also that dream of Procla's to frighten him.

Retiring, therefore, into the palace, he ordered Jesus to be set before him again.

"What was that they said," asked he, "about Thy being the Son of God? Whence comest thou? Art thou of human birth or more?"

No answer which could have revealed the mystery of His nature was possible at such a time. Anything He might have said, however clear, would, moreover, have been unintelligible to the heathen governor, with his utter want of moral earnestness, and would have been fruitless. Jesus therefore remained silent. Pilate had abundant means of judging from the past, and, besides, it was no question of birth or orgin, but a simple matter of uprightness he was called on to decide. If his prisoner were innocent, he had a right to be set free, whoever He might be.

Pilate's pride was touched by the silence. His momentary tender-

ness turned into lowering passion: for power, when it feels itself in the wrong, is the more ready to drown conscience by violence towards the weakness it outrages. "Do you refuse to answer ME?" he asked, in flashing anger. "Do you not know that your life is in my hands, and hangs on my nod? that I can crucify, or release Thee at my pleasure?"

Had he been self-possessed at the moment, and able to ponder things aright, he would have seen an answer to his question, even in Christ's silence. For it is certain that He in whose lips no deceit was ever found, would, on the instant, have honourably confessed that He was only a man, had He been no more. His very silence was a testimony to His divine dignity.

But He was now no longer silent. "You have indeed," said He, power over me, but you would have none were it not given you from above, from God. But your sin, though great, in condemning me against your conscience, and exercising on me the power granted you by God, is not so great as that of others; for you are only an instrument in His hands to carry out His counsels. The chief guilt lies on those who have delivered me to you to force you to carry out their will against me. Theirs is the greater sin!" Even in His lowliest humiliation, He is tender and pitiful to the man who has done Him so much wrong, and bears Himself towards Him, Roman governor though He be, as if He were the judge and Pilate the prisoner. He has nothing to say of his own agonies or wrongs, but only warning earnestness at the thought of the sin that was being wrought by men against their own souls.

The words, and the whole bearing of Jesus, struck into the heart of the Roman. Presence of mind and self-respectful dignity, even in the most helpless victim of injustice, have an irresistible power over the oppressor. How much more such a unique grandeur as diffused itself round this mysterious man! Pilate was more than ever resolved to release Him. Returning once again to the tribunal, Jesus at his side, he strove to bring the priests and the crowd to content themselves with what their victim had already suffered.

But the priests and Rabbis had hit upon a new terror for the half-righteous judge. Hardly waiting to hear his first words, they raised a cry which they and the mob kept shouting till Pilate was thoroughly alarmed and unnerved. "If you let this man go, you are not true to Cæsar. Any one that makes Himself a king, as He has done, declares Himself against Cæsar."

Pilate knew the jealous, suspicious character of Tiberius, and feared his displeasure the more, because his conscience told him how he had abused his office by every form of tyranny, so that an appeal to Rome might well be fatal to him. Should he expose himself to the displeasure of the Emperor? He was ready for any act of weak unrighteousness, rather than brave a censure from Capræa, far less the risk of its vengeance. He, doubtless, tried to make himself be-

lieve that he could not, in any case, save Christ's life, and flattered himself that he had acted with exceptional uprightness. He must, after all, look to himself, first. Would he bring down on himself a recall; perhaps banishment, or even worse; to save a Jew, because justice demanded his doing so? "Who," doubtless thought the mere politician, "in my position, would dream of committing such a folly? Shall I sacrifice myself for any one? No!"

Furious at the priesthood and the rabble, who kept shouting the hateful insinuation that clemency would be treason to Cæsar, Pilate once more took his official seat. It was, now, about nine o'clock, and he had at last given way, though with bitter mortification. He would not, even yet, however, surrender without one more effort to carry his point, for he was alarmed alike at Jesus and at the Emperor.

Turning to Jesus, still wearing the crown of thorns and the scarlet cloak—in a burst of unconcealed contempt against the Jews, as impolitic as it was useless, he cried—"Behold your king!" The only answer was a hurricane of cries—"Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!" "What!" cried Pilate, with keen withering mockery —"shall I crucify your king?" As if to say that one so humiliated and outcast was all the king they deserved or could show.

Caiaphas and Hannas, and the group round them, were, however, more than a match for him. They had an answer ready which would force his hand, if he had any thought of still holding out. "We have no king but Cæsar," rose all round him—"we want no other king!" "The hypocrites," doubtless thought Pilate, "with the souls of slaves. Tiberius, himself, has not yet ventured to call himself king, or Lord, and these, his mortal enemies; priests too, pretending to be the heads of religion, pay him homage as king, without being asked, only to force me, by their pretended loyalty, to carry out their revenge against one so much better than themselves."

It was Friday; and Sabbath—on which nothing could be done—began at sunset. If the execution were delayed, new difficulties might rise to save Jewish scruples about the desecration of the holy day, by the exposure, during it, of bodies on the cross. Who, moreover, could tell what might follow, if the followers of Jesus rose against His enemies during this respite, to force a release of their Teacher? Besides, Pilate felt he could not now save Him, and wished the whole matter over as soon and as quietly as possible.

He, therefore, at last, gave the final order for crucifixion.

CHAPTER LXIII.

JUDAS—THE CRUCIFIXION.

Among the spectators of the trial and condemnation, was one who was far enough from joining in the cries of the high priests, and their satellites,—Judas Iscariot. Whatever might have been his thoughts while sustained by excitement, he had no sooner seen Jesus led away by the Roman soldiers from the garden, than all changed. The excitement was over—the whirlwind of evil on which his spirit had for the time ridden, was spent, and in its place had come the awful calm of retrospect and reflection. He was no longer needed by his employers, and found himself, lately so flattered and followed, now cast ignominiously aside, as the traitor he was. The great moon, the silent night, his loneliness, after such agitation, the sudden breaking up of the past, the vision of the three years now so tragically ended; echoes and remembrances of the love and divine goodness of the Master he had betrayed; a sudden realization of the infinite future; with its throne, its unerring Judge,—the assembled universe, the doom of the guilty, and the joy of the faithful, acted and reacted on his heart and brain.

It may be he had stood, pale with remorse and anxiety, through all the incidents of the trial, hoping, against hope, that his Master would at last put forth His supernatural power, and deliver Himself, as perhaps he had expected. It is quite possible that Judas had acted as he had done, to precipitate a crisis, and force Jesus to such a display of His power, as would, even against His will, force on Him the assumption of the worldly Messianic dignity, from which the unhappy fallen man had dreamed of political greatness, and rich official state for himself.

To his unspeakable horror, he had found all his calculations miscarry. Perhaps after waiting amongst the crowd before Pilate, as well as at the gate of the high priest, he had heard the shouts of the priests and the mob,—the sound of the knout falling on the bleeding back—the awful demand for The Cross—that image of lowest degradation and extremest agony—and last of all, the fatal utterance of Pilate—"I, miles, expedi crucem,"—"Go, soldier, prepare the cross." They had fallen in a Sodom-like fire-rain on his soul, and he felt himself already the accursed of time and eternity. The light of life had passed into the darkness visible of despair. Which way he looked was hell; himself was hell.

Hurrying to the Temple with his wretched gain, for which he had bartered away his inheritance of one of the twelve thrones of the resurrection, and an apostle's glory here, in the heavenly kingdom his Master had founded,—he sought to thrust it back again on the

priests from whom he had got it, as the wages of his guilt—paid beforehand, to quicken his zeal. But though willing to prop up their Temple system by murder, they would on no account, compromise their own ceremonial purity, or that of the sacred treasury, by taking back the coin, which they themselves had polluted, by paying it as the price of crime. They could see the stain of the blood on the shekels, but not on their own souls. Judas had served their purpose, and was nothing to them now. He had in his agony pressed into the very court of the priests, where they were gathered—ground sacred to consecrated feet. "Would they do nothing yet, to save his Master? He had not expected they would go to such awful extremes. Jesus was innocent. All he had said against Him was untrue. Would they not for their holy office sake, for the sake of the holy spot on which they then were, undo the awful crime?"

He might as well have spoken to the marble pavement on which they stood, with bare feet, in reverence of the Holy of Holies close by. The stone was not more impassive than their hearts. "What is it to us," answered they, "what you have done? That is your own affair. See you to it." But if he could not move them, he could at least clear himself, so far, by casting back among them the money with which they had hired him. Throwing it down on the pavement, therefore, he went out, perhaps in the darkness of early morning—for possibly he did not wait for the last acts of the trial, but had been overwhelmed by the condemnation of a Jesus by the Jewish authorities—and hanged himself in a spot of ground, till then known as the clay-yard of a potter of the town, but thenceforth as the Field of Blood. Nor was even this the end, for the cord by which he had suspended himself gave way, and he fell beneath, ruptured and revolting.

To put money, defiled from any cause, into the treasury was unlawful. To what could the authorities apply it? How, better, than to buy the worn-out clay pit, already defiled by the suicide of Judas, for the further defilement of a graveyard. There was need of a spot in which to bury foreign Jews, who might die in Jerusalem. So the scene of the traitor's death became doubly a "field of blood."

Meanwhile, preparations were being rapidly made for crucifixion.

Death by the cross was the most terrible and the most dreaded and shameful punishment of antiquity—a punishment, the very name of which, Cicero tells us, should never come near the thoughts, the eyes, or ears, of a Roman citizen, far less his person. It was of Eastern origin, and had been in use among the Persians and Carthaginians, long before its employment in Western countries. Alexander the Great adopted it in Palestine, from the Phenicians, after the defence of Tyre, which he punished by crucifying two thousand citizens, when the place surrendered. Crassus signalized its introduction into Roman use by lining the road from Capau to Rome with crucified slaves, captured in the revolt of Spartacus, and Augustus

finally inaugurated its general use, by crucifying six thousand slaves at once, in Sicily, in his suppression of the war raised by Sextus Pompeius.

It was not a Jewish punishment, for the cases mentioned in the Old Testament of "hanging up" criminals or offenders refer only to their dead bodies, or were imitations of the heathen custom by some of the kings. For Jews to crucify a Jew, indeed, would have been impossible, as the national sentiment would have revolted from it. The cruelty of heathenism had to be called in by the corrupt and sunken priesthood, before such a death could be inflicted on any member of the nation, far less on one declared by the Procurator himself to be innocent. It was the punishment inflicted by heathenism, which knew no compassion or reverence for a man as man,—on the worst criminals, on highway robbers, rebels and slaves, or on provincials who, in the eyes of Rome, were only slaves, if they fell into crime.

The cross used at Calvary consisted of a strong post, which was carried beforehand to the place of execution, and of two cross pieces, borne to the spot by the victim, and afterwards nailed to the uprights so that they slanted forward, and let the sufferer lean on his stretched out hands, and thus relieve the pressure of his body downwards. A stout rough wooden pin, in the middle of the upright post, supplied a seat of fitting agony, for the weight of the body would otherwise have torn it from the cross.

While everything was being prepared, Jesus was exposed in the guard-room, once more, to the insults of the soldiery. At last, however, all was ready, and the scarlet cloak was now removed, and His own linen abba replaced. It was the custom, as I have said, for offenders themselves to carry the transverse pieces of their cross, and these, therefore, were now laid on the shoulders of Jesus, faint as He was with mental and bodily distress. A detachment of the cohort which had been massed in the court of the palace, in case of disturbance, was told off under a centurion to guard the procession to the place of death, the officer being responsible for the due execution of the sentence. Jesus was not, however, to die alone, Two more prisoners were brought out to suffer with him; men convicted not of mere insurrection, but of robbery; the special trouble of the land in these evil times, even till Jerusalem perished. Pilate could hardly have intended to degrade Jesus in the eyes of the Jews by associating Him with enemies of society, but the want of thought, with which he formed such a group of victims, simply to empty his prison, and get through the annual Easter executions at once, shows how superficial an impression had been made on his light nature by all that had passed. His seriousness had been written in water; heartlessness and utter want of moral earnestnesss were his prevailing mood.

And now the sad procession began. It was about ten in the forenoon, for at least an hour had been spent in getting ready. The

soldiers stepped into their ranks, and the prisoners were set, under guard, in their places; each carrying, hung from his neck, a whitened board, proclaiming in large black letters the offences for which he was about to die; unless, indeed, as in some cases, a soldier bore it before them. Each, also, bore the cross beams of his cross, fastened together like the letter V, with his arms bound to the projecting ends.

It is vain to attempt to follow the route, for the whole surface of Jerusalem has changed since then. Roman London is only reached at a depth of sixteen or seventeen feet, though the history of our island is comparatively peaceful; but Jerusalem has stood siege after siege till the streets of Christ's day are buried below the ruins of successive cities. All we know is that the place of execution was outside the walls, to the north-west, at the side of a leading road, to let the spectacle be seen by the crowds passing and repassing. From the palace of Herod, the sad procession must have passed out under the shadow of the great castles of Hippicus, Phasael, and Mariamne; through the Hebron or Jaffa gate, or the gate Gennath. As it moved slowly on, an official proclaimed aloud the names of the prisoners, and the offences for which they were about to die. Four soldiers walked beside each, as the special guard and executioners, the rest of the detachment preceding and following.

As it moved through the narrow streets, a great crowd accompanied it. The Temple had special claims on the citizens in the Passover week, and, besides, it would soon be Sabbath, and they were busy with their worldly affairs, and loath to afford the time; yet many, both friends and enemies, pressed after the soldiers. The women especially, less easily diverted from sorrow and pity, either by religious rites or every-day duties, thronged to see One led out to die of whom they had heard so much. In the East, men and women, even man and wife, never appear in public together, and hence all were free to show their feelings independently. The Galilæans in the city had been taken by surprise, and had had no time to gather at the trial and show sympathy with their countryman, whom so many of them reckoned as a prophet. Only fanatical Jerusalem, to which the cry of the priests was law, and to whom Jesus, as a supposed enemy of the Temple,—the idol at once of their bigotry and their pocket,—was doubly hateful, had learned of the arrest in the early morning, and had gathered to yell down Pilate's proposals of release.

Two incidents only are recorded of the march to the place of execution. The beams laid on Jesus soon proved too heavy, in the hilly streets, for His exhausted strength, and His slow advance with them so delayed the procession that the guard grew impatient, and having seized a passer-by coming from the country, compelled him to bear them. The involuntary cross-bearer was a foreign Jew, called Simon, from Cyrene, in North Africa; now part of Tunis, then part

of the province of Libya. Ptolemæus Lagi had carried off a hundred thousand Jews from Palestine, and settled them in these part of North Africa, and in three hundred years they had increased so greatly in numbers, that a special synagogue was erected in Jerusalem for the pilgrims they yielded to the great feasts. Simon's appearance marked him as a foreigner, for, in the East, all nationalities have their distinctive dress; and, as a stranger, the infamy of being made to carry a cross would be less likely to cause a stir. It may be that he showed sympathy with Jesus, but, in any case, his service to Him appears to have resulted in his conversion, with all his family; for it is easy to believe the tradition that the "Rufus and his mother," of whom St. Paul, a quarter of a century later, speaks so tenderly, were his wife and one of the two sons, Alexander and Rufus, mentioned by St. Mark as known to his readers.

From the moment of His declaring Himself the Messiah, and being condemned to die for doing so, Jesus had had nothing more to say to His judges. No cry of pain; no murmur of impatience escaped Him. He had realized to the full all that the victorious completion of His work, through self-sacrifice, demanded, and bore indignities and agonies with unbroken submission. He was dying to free mankind from the bondage of the letter; to break, for ever, the chains of Rabbinism and priestly caste, from the human soul; to inaugurate the reign of spiritual religion; and, above all, to atone for man's sin, and then enter into His glory with the Father. The joy set before Him strengthened Him, in the words of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to endure the cross, and despise the shame.

But His lips, shut for hours, opened once more on the way to His death. The road was lined with spectators, many of whom did not attempt to conceal their sympathy; and a great crowd followed, both of men and women, the latter filling the air with loud lamentations and wailings. Touched with their grief, so strangely sweet after such a long bitterness of mockery and clamorous hatred, the Innocent One stopped on His way, and turning to them, bade them lament, not for Him, but for themselves.

"Daughters of Jerusalem," said He, "weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves." His death was the fulfilment of the counsels of God, and His apparent overthrow was His real and eternal victory. They might have wept for Him, had He shrunk from completing the work given Him to do, and failed to perfect the great plan of human salvation. "But weep for yourselves and for your children. The fate of Jerusalem which I love so well, is sealed, and will be sad indeed compared with my momentary pains. For if your enemies do these things to Me, a green fruit-bearing tree that deserves to live and be cherished—Me, pronounced guiltless even by the judge himself—what will they do with the dry and worthless tree of the nation, guilty before God and man? Israel is a dry, leafless trunk that will bear no more fruit, but is doomed to the burning. What will be its

fate, if Mine, who am green and fresh in innocence, be what it is! Yet the green, cut down, will sprout again, but the dry will perish for evermore! In that day the curse of ages of sin and hypocrisy will overwhelm your city and Temple, with its watchers and shepherds."

He had always loved children, and had often pressed them to His heart and carried them in His arms, but the vision of the awful future now rising before Him was darkened by this very tenderness. To bear children was the glory of every Jewish wife; but in after years, He told them, they would call her blessed who had never borne. "Your nation has not known the day of its visitation: it has pushed back My hand when I offered it life here and hereafter; it has killed its prophets and stoned them that were sent to it from God; and now the things of its peace are hid from its eyes. Instead of life let it wish a grave, ere its despairing cry rises that the mountains should fall on it, and the hills cover it from the avenging wrath of God." Words of tender human love, welling up from the depths of a sacred pity, even under the shadow of the cross!

The spot on which the crosses were to be erected stood near some of the gardens of the suburbs, and was known by the Aramaic name, Golgotha, of which Cranion—a skull—given as the name by St. Luke, writing for Gentiles, is the Greek translation, and Calvaria, Calvary, the Latin. From a fancied allusion to the shape of a skull, tradition has handed it down as a hill; but all the four Gospels call it simply a place, as if it had its name only from its bare smoothness and slight convexity, as we speak of the *brow* of a hill from its rounded slope. It may have been the usual place of execution, but there is nothing in the name to lead to the belief, for, in that case, it would have been spoken of as a place of *skulls;* had they been permitted to lie unburied in Judea, which was impossible.

The cross pieces were nailed in their places on the upright posts, sometimes before, sometimes after, the posts themselves had been set up. Jesus and His fellow-sufferers, in either case, were now stripped once more, as they had been before they were scourged—a linen cloth at most being left round their loins. The centre cross was set apart for our Lord, and He was laid on it either as it lay on the ground, or lifted and tied to it as it stood upright, His arms stretched along the two cross beams, and His body resting on the projecting pin of rough wood, misnamed a seat. The most dreadful part then followed; for, though even the Egyptians only tied the victims to the cross, the Romans and Carthaginians added to the torture, by driving a huge nail through the palm of each hand into the wood. The legs were next bent up till the souls of the feet lay flat on the upright beam, and then they, too, were fastened, either, separately, by two great iron nails, or over each other, by one.

A single touch of humanity was permitted during these preparations—the offer of a draught of the common sour wine drunk by the

soldiers, mingled with some stupefying bitter drug—usually myrrh. The ladies of Jerusalem made it, indeed, their special task to provide it for all condemned persons. But Jesus would take nothing to cloud His faculties, even though it might mitigate His pain. The cross was now lifted up and planted in the ground, with a rough shock of undescribable agony. It was perhaps then that the first words uttered from it rose from His lips—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,"—words breathing love, patience, submission, gentleness, and goodwill, not only towards the soldiers, who were only the blind servants of power, but even to Pilate, and Caiaphas, Hannas, and Jerusalem!

Racked by the extremest pain, and covered with every shame which men were wont to heap on the greatest criminals; forsaken and denied by His disciples; no sigh escaped His lips, no cry of agony, no bitter or faltering word; only a prayer for the forgiveness of His enemies. They had acted in blindness, under the impulse of religious and political fanaticism, for, to use St. Paul's words, had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. They thought, without doubt, that they were doing a service well-pleasing to God in putting Him to death. It stood written in the books of Moses, "Cursed be he who does not fulfil the words of the law to do them," and they fancied they were obeying this command in crucifying Him for slighting their additions, which they confounded with the words of God. In spite of all their school learning they were blind to the true meaning of the Scriptures, though this ignorance was not guiltless, for He had sought for three years to rouse them to a better knowledge. But their guilt was in some measure lessened by the influence on their minds of education and the prescriptions of centuries, which had shut their eyes to the light He brought them. His prayer that His heavenly Father would pardon them was only a last utterance of the love of which He had been the embodiment and expression through life, and the fitting illustration of His words that He came to call the sick; not those who had no need of a physician.

The "title" that had been borne before Him, or hung from His neck, was now nailed on the projecting top of the cross, over His head. That all classes might be able to read it, Pilate had it written in the three languages of the country—the Aramaic of the people, the Latin of the Romans, and the Greek of the foreign population. It proclaimed Him THE KING OF THE JEWS, but seems to have run differently in each language, to judge from the variations in the Gospels.

No tribute could have been more fitting, or more prophetic than an inscription which revealed unconsciously the relation of the Cross to all the nationalities of the world. The crucifixion was now completed, and there only remained the weary interval, till death came to deliver the sufferers from their agonies. Meanwhile the troops, with

their centurion, kept the ground and guarded the three crosses, for they were answerable with their lives for the due carrying out of the execution.

The four soldiers—a quaternion—specially detailed to carry out the sentence of the Procurator, were now free to appropriate, as their perquisites, the clothes of the three victims. The outer garments of Jesus they divided into four shares—tearing the larger, to make the division equal—for they were not worth keeping entire. The inner robe, however, like the robes of the priests, was of one piece woven from the top without any seam or stitching, and would be destroyed by rending. The dice were ready in their pocket, and one of their brazen helmets would serve to throw them; it would be better to cast lots for this, and let him who won the highest number keep it for himself—and so it was done. No wonder that both Matthew and John, looking back on the scene, were struck by the fact that it had been written, ages before, in the twenty-second Psalm, which the Jews of that day, as well as Christians, rightly believed to refer to the Messiah—"They parted my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots."

The inscription on the cross had been Pilate's revenge for the condemnation of Jesus, wrung from him by the priests. To proclaim Him, the villager of Nazareth, as the King of the Jews, marked, at once, what was fit, in his opinion, for them, and flung in their faces a bitter reproach of having betrayed their own nation and countryman, to Rome. The authorities of the Temple were indignant, and yet alarmed, and applied to him to alter it. But he had suffered enough at their hands, and smarting under his defeat and humiliation, dismissed them with the laconic answer, "What I have written I have written."

Meanwhile the fierce heat of a Syrian noon beat down on the cross. The suffering in crucifixion, from which death at last resulted, rose partly from the constrained and fixed position of the body, and of the outstretched arms, which caused acute pain from every twitch or motion of the back, lacerated by the knout, and of the hands and feet, pierced by the nails. These latter were, moreover, driven through parts where many sensitive nerves and sinews come together, and some of these were mutilated; others violently crushed down. Inflammation of the wounds in both hands and feet, speedily set in, and ere long rose also in other places, where the circulation was checked by the tension of the parts. Intolerable thirst, and ever-increasing pain, resulted. The blood, which could no longer reach the extremities, rose to the head, swelled the veins and arteries in it unnaturally, and caused the most agonizing tortures in the brain. As, besides, it could no longer move freely from the lungs, the heart grew more and more oppressed, and all the veins were distended. Had the wounds bled freely, it would have been a great relief, but there was very little lost. The weight of the body itself, resting on

the wooden pin of the upright beam; the burning heat of the sun scorching the veins, and the hot wind, which dried up the moisture of the body, made each moment more terrible than that before. The numbness and stiffness of the more distant muscles brought on painful convulsions, and this numbness, slowly extending, sometimes through two or three days, at last reached the vital parts, and released the sufferer by death.

Common pity would have left the victim of such agony to die in peace. But it is reserved to the malignant hatred and passion which spring from perverted religious zeal to ignore compassion. The title over His head was as offensive to the people as to the priests and Rabbis, for it was a virtual ridicule of their impotent aspirations after universal monarchy. Beneath the cross the same mockery indulged itself, as the Procurator had thought not beneath the dignity of Rome. The fierce crowd had heard repeatedly that day of Jesus having said, as was asserted, that He could destroy their vast temple, and build it up again in three days. They had heard also a great deal about His miracles, and of His calling Himself the Son of God, but it seemed as if the whole must have been a deception, else why would He let Himself die such a death? There were taunts and bitter gibes, from the mob and the soldiers, and triumphant sneers at His having met the fate He deserved; the very high priests, and Rabbis, and elders, indeed, degraded themselves to the level of the rabble in their unmanly taunts, among their own knots and groups. "Thou that destroyest the Temple, and buildest it in three days, show that Thou couldst have done so, by saving Thyself, and coming down from the cross," called out a looker-on, with a contemptuous laugh. "If Thou be the Son of God, as Thou sayest," cried another, "come down from the cross." "He wrought miracles to save others," said a high priest to his fellow, "by the help of Beelzebub, but He cannot save Himself, now His master has forsaken Him." The crowd, catching their spirit, bandied from one to another the scoff, "If He be the Christ, the King of Israel, the Chosen of God, let Him descend from the cross, that we may see and believe." A true index to their religious ideas! If they saw Him with their bodily eyes, by a miracle come down from the cross, they would believe! Their religion rested on their five senses. The invisible spiritual power, in which Jesus taught, did His work, and founded His kingdom, had no existence for them. The only authority for their faith was what they could grasp with their hands, or see with their eyes!

Nor was the only railing, and trial of bitter mocking, from the spectators. Affecting indifference to their own sufferings, and perhaps wishing to get a poor favour with the crowd, in their last hours; perhaps angry that Jesus had left both them and Himself to die, when He might have saved them; the two unhappy men crucified with Him, cast the same reproaches in His teeth. But a strange contrast was soon to display itself. One of the two, evelong, awed and won by

His bearing under such treatment; perhaps thinking of the daughters of Jerusalem he had seen weeping by the way; or of the words of Jesus in which He spoke of the distant future as open before Him; perhaps struck by the title over the Saviour's head, or by the very taunts which spoke of His having trusted in God, and having claimed to be the Christ, the Chosen, the Son of the Highest; perhaps recollecting some words of His heard in happier days; repented of his bitterness, and turned to his companion, to persuade him, also, to kinder thoughts. "Have you no fear of God," said he, "when you think that you are dying the same death as He whom you are still reproaching? It is no time to mock, when you are so near death. Besides, we are dying justly, for we are receiving the fitting punishment of our deeds; but this man, as the very Procurator has said, has done nothing amiss."

Then followed words which showed that his repentance and faith were alike sincere and intelligent. He had been silently watching the meek and patient endurance by his mysterious Fellow-Sufferer, of all that His enemies could do, and had come to the belief that He was, in reality, the Messiah He declared Himself to be. With death near, the folly of the earthly dreams of his countrymen—for he must have been a Jew—flashed on his mind. As the Messiah, He who now hung in agony must have a kingdom of which death could not deprive Him, and it must be in the world beyond, since He had only a cross here. He would doubtless enter on it, as even the Rabbis taught, at the resurrection of the dead, and reign over it for all future ages.

"O Lord," said he, therefore, turning as far as he could towards Jesus, as he spoke, "remember me when Thou enterest into the enjoyment of Thy kingdom."

"I shall," replied Jesus. "This very day thou shalt be with me, among the blessed, in Paradise."

To have confessed his faith when Christ hung on the cross, and was deserted even by His Apostles, won for him the high reward of being the first trophy of the victory that cross achieved. His ideas might be vague and obscure enough; but the broken heart and trustful love which uttered them, made them dear to the Saviour. Angry blasphemies alone had hitherto greeted Him, but now came this prayer, dropping like balm on His wounded spirit! Calmly, and with the bounty of a king—though now nailed to the cross—He showed His answering love by the gift of divine pardon of sin, and the bestowment of a crown in Paradise!

The Eleven had never gathered again after the arrest, and had been too much alarmed even to venture, singly, into the crowd which stood outside the cordon of troops round the three crosses. John, alone, had had courage enough to follow his Master to Calvary, and to cheer Him by the proof of fidelity in at least one heart. He had, indeed, foreseen that He would be deserted thus in His hour of need; but He was too near His triumph to notice their absence as otherwise He

might. The veil between Him and His eternal glory was, each moment, fading into the upper light, and had He not, even now, won the first trophy of His redeeming love, to bear with Him to heaven?

The last sight we have of John, before the crucifixion, is in the courtyard of the high priest, where his silence and prudent keeping in the background, saved him from the danger before which Peter had fallen. He had seen Jesus led away to Pilate, and had, apparently, followed Him to the palace, waiting in the angry crowd till the weak, time-serving Procurator had given Him up to the cross. He may have left as soon as the end was known, to hasten into the city with the sad news, to those anxious to hear; above all, to tell her whose soul the sword was now about to pierce most keenly. Mary, likely, heard her Son's fate from his lips. She had come to Jerusalem to be near Him, but we do not know when; for she was not one of the group of pious Galilæan women who habitually followed Him, though she was with them at this moment. How many were together is not told; but Mary, at least, on hearing John's words, determined, in her love, to go at once to Calvary, and some round her resolved to go with her. Her own sister, who, it may be, was Salome, the mother of John; Mary, the wife of Clōpas; Mary from Magdala, on the banks of Gennesareth, would attend her, and John, faithful as a woman, would not stay behind.

The first sight the Virgin had of her Son was as He hung on the cross, at the roadside, mocked by the crowd and the passers-by, and scowled at by the high priests and dignitaries, who had come out to glut the hatred they bore Him by the sight of His agony. A supernatural darkness—the sign of the sorrow and the wrath of heaven—had fallen on the landscape soon after the nailing to the cross—though it was then high noon; but the spectators had fancied it only a strange incident in the weather. The Sufferer had offered His prayer for His murderers, and had spoken words of comfort to the penitent spirit at His side; when, as His eyes wandered over the crowd, He saw, through the gloom, John, standing by His mother's side. None of His "brothers or sisters" were there, for His resurrection was first to win them to His cause, and Mary, long a widow, was now to be more so still. He knew John's heart, and, indeed, his presence there proclaimed it. The sight of His mother in tears; true even in death; in spite of danger, or of her broken heart, or of the reproaches rising on every side; the remembrance of Nazareth; the thought of the sorrows that so often, in these last years, had pierced her soul, and of the supreme grief that had now overwhelmed her; the recognition of the true faith in Him, shining out in these last hours, as the child, borne by miracle to be a Saviour, the holy Son of God; and the thought that His earthly relations to her were closed for ever, filled His heart with tender emotions.

Turning His face, now veiled with many sorrows, to her and John, He provided for the one, and honored the fidelity of the other. A few

words gave Mary a home and another son, and rewarded the friend of His soul by the charge to take the place towards Mary He Himself was leaving. "Woman," said He, in tones of infinite tenderness, "behold, in him at thy side thou hast thy Son given back to thee." Then, looking at John, He added, "To thee I trust My mother; let her be thy mother for My sake."

Need we wonder that the beloved disciple, writing his Gospel in old age, felt a sweet reward in recalling an incident so unspeakably touching? Mary, henceforth, had a home, for John took her to his own. His love to her divine Son made him dearer to her than the circle of Nazareth, however related. In Mary, he saw a second mother; in John, the widowed one saw a son. Nor was the new nearness to Jesus the only reward to John from the cross. His Master had shown, by His thoughts for others rather than Himself, in this time of His greatest need, that He was still what He had always been. Looking up to Him, John saw the light of higher than earthly victory on His pale features, and felt his faith confirmed for ever.

It was now three o'clock, and Jesus had hung on the cross about three hours. Darkness still lay like a pall over the landscape, as if nature, less insensible than man, refused to look on such a spectacle, or would prefigure the sadness one day to be spread over all nations for the sin that had caused so awful a sacrifice. What had been passing in His spirit no one can know. As a man He had a nature, in all things, except its sinlessness, like that of the race at large. But He was also the divine Son of God, for a time in the form of a servant, and now, of His own free love to man, dying as a ransom for sin. We accept the transcendent mystery but we cannot hope to explain it. The cross was but the culmination of a long martyrdom. His soul had often been sore troubled; His sighs had been marked even by His disciples. To be dying for the sake of men, and yet to be treated as their foe; to be misconceived and misrepresented; to have His heart full of infinite love, and hear, even now, only execrations, brought back, for a moment, the mental agony of Gethsemane. It was the "power of darkness;" the final struggle with the prince of this world. To the unendurable torture of the body there was added the unspeakable spiritual pain of apparently utter rejection by man, whom He loved with a love so divine! His Father was with Him in the midst of the darkness as much as in the Transfiguration at Cæsarea Philippi, but the gathering clouds and gloom of these last awful hours made it seem, for an instant, as if His face were hidden. The shadows of death passed for a moment in blackness and horror over His spirit, and His mental anguish relieved itself by a great cry of distress. The language we have heard from our mother's lips and have spoken in childhood, may be laid aside in after years for another, to meet the requirements of life; and Jesus, doubtless, in these last years, had often had to use the Greek of city communities, instead of His own simple Galilæan.

But, now, the sounds of infancy, always nearest the heart, and sure to come to the lips in our deepest emotion, returned in His anguish, and in words which He had learned at His mother's knee, His heart uttered its last wail—

"Eloï! Eloï! lama sabachthani?"
"My God! My God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"

The first words sounded like the name of the great prophet Elijah, the expected herald of the Messiah, and were taken, by some in the crowd, for a cry that he should come to save Him. Meanwhile, one near, more pitiful than the rest; caring little for the words, saw the agony of which they were the expression, and ran and filled a sponge with the sour wine-and-water of the soldiers, and having fixed it on the short stem of a hyssop-plant, growing near, put it to His lips; for the cross was quite low, the feet of Jesus reaching nearly to the ground.

A moment more, and all was over. The cloud had passed as suddenly as it rose. Far and wide, over the vanquished throngs of His enemies, with a loud voice, as if uttering His shout of eternal victory before entering into His glory, He cried,

IT IS FINISHED!

Then, more gently, came the words :—

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

A moment more, and there rose a great cry, as of mortal agony: the head fell. He was dead.

The great work of salvation was now, at last, completed; prophecy fulfilled; the Ancient Covenant at an end, the New inaugurated. Judaism was for ever obsolete, and the Holy of Holies had ceased to be the peculiar presence-chamber of Jehovah among men. Nor was a sign wanting that it was so, for the great veil of purple and gold—sixty feet long and thirty broad—before the inner sanctuary of the Temple, suddenly rent itself in two, from the top to the bottom, at the moment of Christ's death: as if He who had hitherto dwelt there had gone forth to lead up His Eternal Son to His own right hand. And, indeed, not only the yielding veil of the Temple, but the very rocks, round Calvary, as St. Matthew tells us, "were rent, and the earth quaked, the graves were opened, and many of the saints sleeping in them rose from the dead, and went into the Holy City, and appeared unto many."

One incident is recorded of this moment, by three of the Evangelists. The centurion in charge of the troops had halted, as he passed the cross, when Jesus uttered His loud death-cry. He was within a few yards of Him, and must have involuntarily fixed his gaze on Him at such a sound. He saw the change pass over His features; the

light of life leaving them, and the head suddenly sink. As it did so, the earthquake shook the ground, and made the three crosses tremble, But the tremor of the earth affected the Roman less than the piercing cry and sudden death. He had likely attended many crucifixions, but had never seen or heard of a man dying within three hours, on a cross. He had never heard a crucified man, strong to the last, utter a shriek that showed, as that of Jesus did, the full vigour of the vital organs to the last. He felt that there was something mysterious in it, and joining with it all He had seen and heard of the Sufferer, he broke involuntarily into the words, "Assuredly this man was righteous; truly this was God's Son." The one expression was, perhaps, equivalent on his lips to the other, but both showed that even heathen spectators were profoundly affected by the spectacle they had witnessed.

Nor was the effect on the spectators less marked. The darkness, the earthquake, and the rending rocks, had filled them with alarm. They had been noisy and ribald enough, for a time, but when all was over, amidst such strange portents of nature, they were glad to hasten home in silence, with the demonstrations of awe peculiar to Eastern populations—smiting their breasts as they went. The incidents of Calvary had prepared the way for the triumph of Pentecost, as perhaps the rending of the veil had been the first step towards the change of feeling in the great company of priests who soon after professed themselves Christians.

The Jewish law, as I have said, knew nothing of crucifixion, but it had been not uncommon to hang up the body of a criminal after death. It was not permitted, however, that it should be exposed after sunset; burial the same day was enacted, "that the land should not be defiled." The Romans, on the contrary, left the bodies on the cross till they were wasted away, or devoured by the dogs, the jackals, or the ravens—as they fell limb from limb. "To feed the crows on the cross" was a familiar expression. It was necessary, therefore, if the Jewish law were to be honoured, that the permission of Pilate should be given for putting the crucified ones to death, if they had not already died, and for taking down and burying their bodies, almost at once. Next day was the great Paschal Sabbath, and only an hour or two remained before it commenced. Three corpses seen on the cross, so near the Temple and the Holy City, on a day so sacred, would make great commotion, as polluting the whole place. Besides, the feelings of the people might turn, with unknown results.

A deputation of the Temple authorities, therefore, waited on Pilate, to get his sanction for putting any of the three to death, who might yet be alive. The common way to do so was in keeping with Roman brutality. The legs of the unfortunates were broken by blows of clubs, and this Pilate authorized to be done, that the shock might kill them at once. The two thieves were found still living, and the horrible order was forthwith executed on them, but Jesus was dead

already, and they left Him untouched. One soldier, however,—resolved that there should be no doubt,—plunged his spear into the Saviour's side, making a gash so wide, that Jesus could afterwards ask Thomas to put his hand into it, and so deep that blood and water poured out in such a quantity as attracted the notice of John, who was still standing close by.

That any one should die so soon on the cross, especially one, like Jesus, in the prime of life, and unweakened by previous ill-health, and in such vigour to the last as to utter such a shriek as that with which He expired, appeared even to Christian antiquity, to imply some supernatural cause. But the mingled flow of blood and water seems to point unmistakably to another explanation. The immediate cause of death appears, beyond question, to have been the rupture of His heart, brought about by mental agony. Excess of joy or grief is known to induce the bursting of some division of the heart, and the consequent flow of blood into the pericardium, or bag, filled with colourless serum, like water, in which the heart is suspended. In ordinary cases, only examination after death discovers the fact, but in that of our Lord, the same end was answered by the thrust of the soldier's spear. In a death from heart-rupture "the hand is suddenly carried to the front of the chest, and a piercing shriek uttered." The hands of Jesus were nailed to the cross, but the appalling shriek is recorded.

Jesus died, literally, of a broken heart

The heat of the climate in the East has led to the custom of burial following almost immediately after death, but there were special reasons for that of Jesus being hurried. It was the eve of the great Passover Sabbath, and no corpse could be left unburied to defile the ceremonial purity of the Holy City, on that day. It was necessary, therefore, that our Lord be buried without a moment's delay, for sunset, when the Sabbath began, was rapidly approaching.

Bodies of Jewish criminals seem to have been buried with ignominy, in the Valley of Hinnom; known, from this reason, as the Valley of Corpses—amidst the unclean dust-heaps of the city, and the ashes of the burned offal of the Temple sacrifices. They could not be laid in the graves of their fathers—the common burial-place of the community—for the guilty could not be buried with the just—but were huddled out of sight—the beheaded, or hanged, in one spot; the stoned, and burned, in another. But such an indignity was not to befall the sacred form of the Saviour.

Among the spectators of the crucifixion there had been one, if not two, whose position might have enabled them to be of service to Jesus in His hour of need, before the high priestly court, had they had the moral courage to avow their convictions. Joseph, a member of the ruling class, known by the name of his birthplace—Arimathea, or Ramathaim Zophim, where Samuel the prophet was born—among the "fruitful hills" of Ephraim—had long been a secret disciple; and

so, also, had Nicodemus, another member of the theocratic oligarchy. Afraid of the overwhelming opposition they must encounter by supporting Christ, they had timidly kept in the background during His trial, though neither had voted for the condemnation. Joseph, indeed, if not both, had even braved public opinion, and the wrath of their fellow-counsellors, by following Jesus to Calvary, Now that He was dead, breaking through all weak reserve and caution at last, he went into the city, and waited on the Procurator, in his palace, to ask as a favour, that the body of Jesus might be put at his disposal. He would fain honour His lifeless form, if only to show his regret and shame for unworthy half-heartedness while He still lived. The meekness and majestic silence under all reproaches and indignities; the veiled sky, the trembling earth; the prayer of the Sufferer for His murderers; His wail of mental agony, as if forsaken; and then the great shriek, and sudden death—had awed his soul, and lifted him far above fear of man. He had been waiting for the Kingdom of God before, but would openly identify himself with its founder now.

Pilate was astonished, alike, that a Jew in Joseph's position should make such a request, and that Jesus should already be dead. It was not allowed to remove a body from the cross without formal permission from the Procurator. The Eleven, with one exception, had left their Master alone amidst His enemies in His last awful hours, and even the women who had watched the cross, did not venture to ask the stony-hearted governor to let them pay the last tribute of love to the dead. It was no light matter Joseph had undertaken; for to take part in a burial, at any time, would defile him for seven days, and make everything unclean which he touched; and to do so now involved his seclusion through the whole Passover week—with all its holy observances and rejoicings. But, conscience-stricken for the past, he had risen superior, alike to prudent inaction or ceremonial prejudice, and would render his Master a tribute and service especially sacred in the eyes of a Jew. It was one of the most loved remembrances of the hero Tobit, in the old times of the first exile, that he buried any Jew whom he found cast out dead, round Nineveh, and Josephus could add no darker horror, a generation later, to the picture of the fall of Jerusalem, than by telling that the Zealots would not bury those slain in the city or who fell down on the roads. Joseph would not suffer Jesus to want the last offices, with all the indignity the neglect would imply.

Sending for the officer who had charge of the execution, and finding that Jesus was really dead, Pilate granted Joseph's strange request. A brave deed had had its success. The humour of the Procurator could not be counted on, and the rage of Joseph's own party was certain. In later days, a servant, Porphyrius, who ventured to ask from the Procurator Firmilian, the body of his martyred master, the presbyter Pamphilus, for burial, was himself seized and put to death. The apocryphal Acts of Pilate describe Joseph as beseeching the favour with

tears and entreaties, and they, thus, rightly mark the gravity of his act, but it is not unlikely that a meaner influence came to his help, for Philo tells us that Pilate's special characteristic was his openness to a bribe. Two or three thousand denarii from the wealthy supplicant, would weigh more than his supplications, in securing his wish.

A written order, or a verbal command to the centurion, put the body at Joseph's disposal.

With the help of servants, and, it may be, of some soldiers, the cross was quickly cut down or lifted from its socket, and laid on the ground, the cords round the limbs untied, and the nails drawn from the hands and feet. An open bier sufficed to carry away the body to its destined resting-place.

Among the Jews the hopes of the future were closely connected with the careful preservation of the body after death. Like the Egyptians, they attached supreme importance to the inviolability of the tomb either by time or violence, and, no less, to the checking of natural decay, by embalming. To perpetuate their existence on earth, at least in the withered mockery of the grave, and to lie in the Holy Land, in the midst of their fathers, had, at all times, been the most sacred wish of the Jews. In the days of Jesus, however, an additional motive for burial in Palestine and a careful preservation of the body, was found in the belief of the Resurrection, which was to take place first in Judea, commencing in the valley under the east of the Temple. Even now an Israelite always seeks to have some of the soil of the Holy Land laid in his grave, that the spot where he rests may be counted part of the sacred ground; if, indeed, his body has not, before the Judgment, made its way through land and sea, to the home of his fathers. The same feeling was all-powerful in the days of our Lord, for in the great sieges of Jerusalem, many Jewish fugitives came back to the city, in spite of the horrors they had already striven to escape—that they might count on at least the last of all blessings, a burial in its holy bounds.

The neighbourhood of Jerusalem, like all other parts of Palestine, has, hence, since the earliest times, abounded in tombs hewn out in the limestone rock. Princes, rich men, every one who could by any means secure it, desired, above all things, to prepare for themselves and their families an "everlasting house," and such a tomb, never yet used, had been hewn out in the hill-side for himself, by Joseph, in a garden not far from Calvary.

To this the body of Jesus was now taken. Nicodemus had come with some of his servants, and he and they, with Joseph and his attendants, and Mary of Magdala, and Mary the mother of James the Less, and of Joses; the wife of Clōpas, and perhaps, some others of the true-hearted women from Galilee, were the only followers of His bier.

Arrived at the grave, the sacred burden was laid down for a time, till the needed preparations were made for placing it in the tomb.

The whole body, stained as it was with blood, was tenderly washed, and then wrapped in broad bands of white linen, within which were thickly strewn powdered myrrh and aloes, which had been provided by Nicodemus for the imperfect embalmment practised by the Jews. The ends of the bandages were apparently secured on the inner side with gum, as in the case of the Egyptian dead. A white cloth was finally laid over the face, after a last kiss, the pledge of undying love. The corpse was then laid in a niche in the rock, and since there was no stone door, as in some tombs, a great stone, prepared for the purpose, was rolled against the entrance, to protect the body from the designs of enemies, or the attacks of wild beasts. It was only a hurried burial, for the last rays of the sun were shining on the garden as the stone was set up against the entrance to the grave.

Even then, however, there were some hearts that could not leave the spot. Though He no longer spoke to them, and they no longer saw Him, some of the Galilæan faithful ones still felt that He was theirs, and sat down as mourners, on the earth, before the door of the tomb. In the evening stillness and gathering twilight they still seemed to hear His voice and see His form, and so they lingered on, as near as might be, into the Sabbath eve, and lamented Him whom they had lost.

Meanwhile, the fears of the chief priests and their party had already awaked. A meeting had been held immediately after the crucifixion, and the success of the scheme to crush Jesus had, doubtless, been the subject of hearty mutual congratulations. But they dreaded that all was not over. It was remembered by one or more that "the deceiver" had spoken darkly of rising from the dead on the third day, and His disciples, acting on this hint, might steal the body, and spread abroad the assertion that He had actually risen, misleading the people more than ever, by claiming for Him divine honors. It was hence necessary that the grave should be watched for three days. A deputation was, therefore, appointed to wait on Pilate, representing their apprehensions. Tired of them, and hating them, the governor was in no humour to argue. "Ye have a guard," said he, with military bluntness. "Go, make it as sure as ye can." This they did. Passing a strong cord across the stone, and securing its ends by clay, they sealed it, after noting that the soldiers were duly stationed so as to make approach without their knowledge impossible.

And thus the Redeemer was left—pale, but victorious—to sleep through the Sabbath.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE RESURRECTION AND THE FORTY DAYS.

THE religion of the Letter had carried out to the bitter end its conflict with the religion of the Spirit. Incapable of reform: identifying its dead rights with the essence of truth; it had crucified the Teacher who had dared to say that they had served their day, and lost their worth. Ritualism had reached its natural culmination in claiming to be the whole of religion, and had slain The Truth itself, when He witnessed against it.

The benumbed and moribund Past had striven to perpetuate itself, by attempting to destroy the Kingdom of the Future in its cradle. How utterly it failed, eighteen centuries have told us.

It was the old story: the light had come into the darkness, and the darkness would not have it; accustomed to the one, it was only dazzled and blinded by the other. Evil had had its apparent triumph. As far as the will and hand of man could effect it, He who, alike as He was man, and as also the Messiah of Israel, knew no spot or blemish of sin, had been crushed as an evil-doer. The one holy being of our race, having revealed Himself as the true Christ, expected for ages; the Hope of Israel; the highest and perfect expression, the true spirit and aim of the ancient economy; and even of all other religions, so far as they had divine elements in them; had been rejected and dishonoured to the uttermost by the rulers of the People of God, and by the great bulk of the nation. He who had desired to secure the salvation of Israel, and through it, of humanity, and had shown how, alone, that salvation could be attained, had been branded by the highest authorities, both of Judaism and heathenism, as a deceiver of the people. The blindness of the one, and the indifference of the other, had united in attempting to crush Him whose only weapons in the assault of evil had been the highest wisdom, the divinest love, and unconquerable meekness. But their triumph was only a momentary and permitted eclipse of the Light of the World, destined, presently, to reappear, in unveiled, and, henceforth, unsetting glory.

"Nothing," says even so keen a critic as Heinrich Ewald, "stands more historically certain than that Jesus rose from the dead and appeared again to His followers, or than that their seeing Him thus, again, was the beginning of a higher faith, and of all their Christian work in the world. It is equally certain that they thus saw Him, not as a common man, or as a shade or ghost risen from the grave; but as the one Only Son of God—already more than man at once in nature and power; and that all who thus beheld Him, recognized at once and instinctively His unique divine dignity, and firmly believed in it thenceforth. The Twelve and others had, indeed, learned to look on

Him, even in life, as the True Messianic King and the Son of God, but from the moment of His reappearing, they recognized more clearly and fully the divine side of His nature, and saw in Him the conqueror of death. Yet the two pictures of Him thus fixed in their minds were in their essence identical. That former familiar appearance of the carnal Christ, and this higher vision of Him, with its depth of emotion and ecstatic joy, were so inter-related that, even in the first days or weeks after His death, they could never have seen in Him the Heavenly Messiah, if they had not first known Him so well as the earthly."

Mary of Magdala, and the wife of Clōpas, herself another Mary—for Mary, from the Hebrew Miriam, was a favourite name ever since the days of the sister of Moses,—had sat on the ground at the door of the garden-tomb in which the Beloved One lay, till late on the evening on Friday. The trumpet announcing the beginning of the great Passover Sabbath had only startled them for a moment, and exhausted nature had, perhaps, first compelled them to leave.

The next day rose calm and bright on the budding and blossoming landscape, for it was Nisan—the month of flowering—and nature was in the secret to be revealed on the morrow—and might well, for joy, put on her fairest. The courts of the Temple were filled from morning till evening, with zealous worshippers: the barefooted, white-robed, and turbaned priests were busy offering the blood of bulls and of goats for the sins of Israel, unconscious that the blood of a greater sacrifice had been shed, of which that which they offered was only the rude, and well-nigh revolting, symbol. Yet it must have been with strange feelings they went through the services of the day. The trumpets and voices of the Levites were loud and clear as ever: the high priest, fresh from Golgotha, not less gorgeous in his splendid robes:—the crowd of priests not less pressed with official toil: the throngs, filling the courts below, not less numerous or devout. But an omen, portentous beyond all their history recorded, had been seen by Levite and priest alike—for, was not the Holy of Holies, hitherto veiled in awful darkness, and entered only once in the year, for a few moments, by the high priest, laid visibly open before all in the court of the priests: in fact, before all in the vast Temple area, for the Holy of Holies stood high above the rest of the sanctuary? The huge, heavy veil of Babylonian tapestry of fine flax, gorgeous in its hyacinth and scarlet and purple, had been mysteriously rent from top to bottom, at the moment when the "enemy of the Temple" expired on Calvary, and the awful presence-chamber of Jehovah had been exposed to every eye, like ground no longer sacred.

The disciples of Jesus, and even the Eleven, had been overwhelmed by the events of the day. Having no clear idea of their Master's meaning, and thinking little on words painful at best, His repeated warnings that He must be put to death, but would rise again from the dead on the third day, had made no lasting impression on their minds.

The catastrophe had been so sudden and complete, that, for the time, they were confounded and paralyzed.

It is the glory of woman that she most seldom forsakes those she loves, even when things are darkest. The two Marys had left the grave only when the deep night compelled them, but, even then, they still had its Dear One in their hearts. The Sabbath, which had begun just as the stone was rolled to the entrance, kept them from doing anything for Him for twenty-four hours, but it was no sooner over, on Saturday at sunset, than, with Salome and Joanna, and some other women, they arranged to take additional spices at the earliest dawn to complete the embalming of the body begun by Nicodemus, but left unfinished through the approach of the Sabbath. Mary, mother of Jesus, was too sorely stricken in heart to join them.

Meanwhile, the Roman sentries were pacing to and fro on their beat, before the sepulchre, their fire lighted, for the spring night was chilly, and besides, the light prevented any one approaching. The true-hearted women had resolved to reach the grave by sunrise, which would take place about a quarter before six in the morning, and slept outside the city gates, which would not open till daybreak at the earliest. The grey dawn had hardly shown itself, when they were afoot on their errand, to perform the last offices of love. As they went, however, a difficulty rose of which they had not thought before. Who would roll away the stone for them, from the door of the sepulchre? They had heard nothing of its having been sealed during the Sabbath, or of the guard being mounted in the garden, else they might have been altogether discouraged. But they had, doubtless, told some of the Eleven where the grave lay, and might hope that one, at least, would be there to help them.

A greater than an Apostle had already, however, been at the tomb. For St. Matthew tells us, "an angel of the Lord had descended from heaven, his countenance shining like lightning, and his raiment white as snow," "and," striking terror even into the Roman guard, "had rolled back the stone from the door." As it opened the Crucified One had come forth, unseen by the dazzled soldiers, and had presently vanished.

They had scarcely left the spot, when the women arrived. The earth had been trembling strangely, but they had kept on their way. How great must have been their astonishment, however, when they found the stone rolled away, and the grave open. There was no longer a guard, for the soldiers had fled in terror at the angelic vision. Mary of Magdala had entered the garden first, and had found things thus, and having run back to the others, hastened into the city to tell Peter and John. Determined to solve the mystery, if possible, her companions came, together, to the sepulchre, and, bending down, entered its inner chamber. But it was only to be appalled by the sight of an angel, in white, sitting in it; as if waiting to bear the glad news to them, of what had taken place. Presently, a second radiant

form stood before them, as they bowed down their faces to the earth, in terror. But words now fell on their ears which brought back joy to their hearts. "Fear not, for I know that ye seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, for He is risen. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go quickly, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He is risen from the dead. Remember the words that He said to you, while He was yet in Galilee—that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And tell them 'He goeth before you into Galilee'—there you will see Him, as He said unto you. So, I have told you."

Mary of Magdala had hurried back to Jerusalem with eager steps, to tell Peter and John, who seem to have lived together at this time, the strange fact of the grave being empty. The Virgin Mother, John's honoured guest, now, doubtless, heard the amazing news, and joined the other Mary in urging the two Apostles to go instantly to the tomb; though their own hearts had at once instinctively impelled both, forthwith, to do so. Peter and John, therefore, were on the way to the garden at once; their eager haste hurrying them to the utmost speed. John, however, younger than Peter, outran him, yet contented himself, on reaching the tomb, with stooping down, and gazing into its empty space. The body, assuredly, was gone, but there was no trace of violence, for the linen bandages lay carefully unrolled, in the empty niche where the Saviour had been placed. Natural reverence, and the awful mystery before him, kept him from actually entering; but no such hesitation checked the impulsive Peter. Passing under the low door he went in, undismayed. The sepulchre was, indeed, empty, as John and the women had found; only the grave-linen was left: the bands for the body and limbs laid by themselves, and the cloth that had covered the face of the Dead, not lying with them, but, folded up, in a place by itself. Following his friend, John now entered, and saw that it was so. The great truth, as he himself tells us in long after years, now, for the first time, flashed on his mind, that Jesus had risen. Neither he nor the other Apostles had, as yet, realized that it had been foretold in the Scriptures that He would do so; for this would have explained the whole at once, and would have thrown light on the hitherto mysterious words of Jesus Himself respecting His resurrection.

Having seen for themselves the empty tomb, they thought like men, only of returning, to discuss with each other and with their brethren, what it could mean. But the women would not leave the spot. Wandering everywhere, they only cared to find Him whom they loved, if they could, for they fancied that the body had been removed to some other place. Mary of Magdala had, meanwhile, returned, and stood weeping at the door of the tomb; her spirit, like that of her companions, overborne with longing anxiety to find Him, if possible, and refusing to believe that she would not. The two Apostles had

seen no angels, but the weeping woman was more highly favoured. Gazing into the sepulchre, the empty space where Jesus had lain was no longer untenanted, but, instead of the Redeemer, she saw two angels, in bright robes, one where the head, and the other where the feet had rested. They were there to comfort the broken heart, as, indeed, they had, doubtless, been before, though for the time they had remained unseen.

"Woman," said one, in a human voice, that disarmed fear, "why weepest thou?"

"Because," replied Mary, in broken accents, "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

As she said this, she turned and drew back into the open garden, hardly knowing what she did. A man now stood before her, in the simple dress of the humbler classes, and being in a garden, she naturally thought him the person employed in it. "Woman," said the stranger, strangly enough as it must have seemed to Mary, in the same words as the angels had used, "why weepest thou?—whom seekest thou?" "Sir," said Mary, taking it for granted, as great sorrow does, that the cause of her grief must be known to all—"if thou hast carried Him from this tomb, pray tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She was a woman of means, and would see that He had a final and suitable resting-place.

No reply was given, except the repetition of her own name—"Mary." But the voice revealed the speaker. It was that of Jesus. She had not recognized the known, but now strangely etherealized features—the one "spiritual body" ever seen by human eyes—the corruptible changed into incorruption—the mortal into immortality. But the sound of that voice, so tenderly remembered, brought with it full recognition of the face and form.

"Rabbouni," said she, in the country tongue they both loved so well—"My Teacher!" and was about to fall on His neck in uncontrollable emotion.

"Touch me not," said He, drawing back, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father, but go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God."

Meanwhile, the other women had come near, and hearing and seeing what had passed, kneeled in lowly worship. As they approached, Jesus greeted them with the salutation they had, doubtless, often heard from His lips—"All hail!"—and the words, and the sight of Mary adoring him, left them no question of its being their Lord. He had withheld Mary from any approach to the tender freedom of former days, but He now stood still while the lowly band, Mary doubtless among them, held Him by the feet, and did Him lowliest reverence. Then, as they kneeled, came the words, grateful to their hearts, "Be not afraid! Go, tell my brethren to go into Galilee, and they will see me there."

So saying, He was gone.

Losing no time, Mary of Magdala, and the others, hurried back to Jerusalem, and found that, in the still early morning, the news had spread to all the Eleven, that their Master was alive, and had been seen both by her and by them. But it seemed too wonderful for simple minds to realize at once, and sounded only like an idle tale which they could not believe. It sufficed, however, to rally them, for the first time since Gethsemane; for that very night they once more assembled as of old.

No detailed narrative of the successive appearances of Jesus to His disciples, after His resurrection, has been left us, each narrative giving only special cases, which had particularly impressed the mind of the writer. It is evident, indeed, that He showed Himself on many occasions of which no record is preserved, for St. John expressly tells us, in his summary of the Forty Days, that besides the sign in the case of Thomas, Jesus did many others before His disciples, which are not written in the Gospel bearing the Apostle's name, and He had promised that He would manifest Himself again, soon after His death, to those who continued faithful to Him. Had we a full narrative of the mysterious interval between Calvary and the Ascension, it would doubtless illustrate more vividly than existing records permit, the fulness and variety of demonstration which alone accounts for the firm and triumphant proclamation of the Resurrection by the Apostles and early Church.

One characteristic is common to all the appearances recounted: they never pass outside the purely spiritual bounds we instinctively associate with the mysterious existence on which Jesus had entered. Even when most closely touching the material and earthly, He is always seen speaking and acting only as a spirit, coming suddenly, revealing Himself in an imperceptibly increasing completeness which culminates at last in some unmistakable sign, and presently vanishing, as suddenly as He appeared. He no longer acts or suffers as before His death, and even when condescending most to the seen and material, only does so to prove Himself, beyond question, the same Jesus as formerly, who in common human life, shared all the experiences and wants of His followers. To some He made Himself known, as to Mary and the women, by a single word or by brief sentences, the voice carrying instant conviction with it: to others, in a lengthened communion, as with the disciples going to Emmaus; kindling their soul by the higher sense He gave to the Scriptures, and by a repetition of the symbolic "breaking of bread," which, on the last night, He had enjoined on the Eleven: to others again, as to Thomas, by an outward material proof from the wounds on His person: and, to still others, by joining them in their simple repast, as with the disciples on the shore of the Lake of galilee.

It would seem, from a notice by St. Paul, that the first appearance, after that granted to the women, was vouchsafed to Peter, perhaps while still in the garden. The completeness of the Apostle's repent

ance had secured as complete a forgiveness, and Jesus could not forget that Peter's home at Capernaum had been His, or how true-hearted he had been from the very days of the Baptism on the Jordan, though he had failed for a moment, when off his guard. The look of reproach, mingled with love and pity, had melted Peter's heart while the denials were yet on his lips, and now, the look and tender words of the risen Christ, bound him to Him for ever. He had been the foremost in zeal for the meek and lowly Master, while still rejected and despised. but when that Master stood before him, the conqueror of death, and the glorified Son of God, his zeal rose to a passsionate devotion that, henceforth, knew no abatement.

The news of the resurrection spread fast among the disciples in Jerusalem; still it required time to reach all, and even when it spread, the fact was too great to be realized at once, and too contrary to previous expectations, to be other than slowly understood. Deep dejection reigned throughout the little Christian company. In spite of all their Master's warnings, His death had come on them by surprise, and, as it seemed, had destroyed everything. Cut off suddenly from all the hopes of an earthly kingdom they had cherished, notwithstanding the constant lessons of Christ's life and words, and deeply distressed by the loss of their Teacher and Head, they appeared to be left helpless, and paralyzed. The horrors of the past few days engrossed their thoughts and conversation. They believed Him now in Paradise, but no one dreamed of a resurrection so soon. John had, indeed, risen in some measure to the grandeur of the truth, and Peter had even seen Him, but the bulk of the disciples had lost well-nigh all hope. The report of the empty grave and of the vision of angels and of their announcement that He was alive, was insufficient to break their gloom, and prolonged their perplexity without relieving it.

Midday had passed, and only floating rumours were, as yet, abroad. The disciples began to think of finally separating, and abandoning all hope; for, without their Master, they were without a leader. Two of them determined to go home to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight miles north-west of Jerusalem, on the high slope of the hills. The way to it was over hills, and through valleys, more and more barren as Jerusalem was left behind, but Emmaus itself looked down into a hollow through which a rivulet spread greenness and beauty. Vines and olive-trees, planted in terraces up the hill-side, and the white and red flowers of the almond-tree, now bursting into blossom in the valley, made the end of the journey a pleasant contrast to its beginning.

The two travellers were not of the Twelve Apostles, and it is not even known whether they had been in the number of the Seventy. The name of the one is told us—Cleopas, a different word from Clōpas, the name of the husband of one of the Marys who waited on Christ, and, thus, no hint is furnished by it. The other has been variously

fancied as Nathanael, Peter, or, even, Luke himself, but it is only conjecture. They were passing on their way, their conversation turning naturally on that of which their hearts were full—and of which they had heard and spoken so much that day. Was Jesus the Messiah or not? If so, how had things happened as they had? His life, His words, His miracles, seemed to show that He was the Messiah, but, on the other hand, how could the Messiah have been crucified?

Meanwhile, a stranger, going their way, overtook them, and, very possibly to their disappointment, joined them. He had heard how eagerly they were disputing and reasoning, so that it seemed only natural when He asked them what subject had so engrossed them. Half impatient that he should seem unacquainted with a matter so supreme to themselves, Cleopas answered—"That he could not have thought there was any one who had been to the feast in Jerusalem, who would ask the subject of their conversation, when such great things, still in every one's mouth, had happened in these last few days."

"What things?" asked the stranger.

"What but respecting Jesus of Nazareth?" replied Cleopas. "He was a prophet of God, a mighty worker of miracles, and a great teacher. All the people must own that He was that. Do you not know about Him? How our priests and Rabbis seized Him, and condemned Him to death, and forced Pilate to crucify Him? Yet we believed, as it seemed on the best grounds, that He was the Messiah, who should have delivered Israel. But it is now the third day since all this has happened. Some of the women belonging to our company, however, have created no little perplexity amongst us. They had gone early in the morning to the tomb, but found it empty, and came back, saying that angels had appeared to them, who told them that He was alive again. On this some of our number went to the sepulchre, and found the women right as to its being empty, but they did not see Jesus Himself."

It was clear that the spark of hope kindled by the first report, had been already extinguished.

The stranger had listened attentively, and now, to their surprise, began to chide them for their doubt, and entered into the matter that so engrossed them, with the earnestness of one who felt as supremely interested in their Master's cause as they were themselves, and with an intelligence that arrested their closest attention.

"What is there in all this, that makes you so dejected and despairing?" asked He. "O ye dull of understanding, and sluggish of heart! Why not grasp more clearly, and believe more readily, what is the burden of all the prophets? Had you been as intelligent, and as ready in your hearts as you should have been, to understand and accept the witness of Scripture, you would have seen that it had been prophesied, from the first, that the Messiah was to suffer and die, as

Jesus has done Let us examine whether the prophets do not show that the Christ—the Messiah—must needs have been thus lowly, entering into His glory only after suffering death, though you have foolishly imagined His kingdom was to come by force and miracle?

The stranger was evidently a learned Rabbi, at least; and had won their anxious, respectful attention already, by the novelty and force of this appeal. But, now, as He journeyed on at their side, their wonder and delight increased, for He quoted passage after passage, from the beginning to the end of the Scriptures, and showed them how the whole spirit and contents of the Holy Books pointed to such a Messiah as He had indicated—a Messiah founding a spiritual, not a mere earthly kingdom, founding it by love and self-sacrifice, not by force. They had never heard such discourse. He threw light on the deep things of Scripture which made it a new book to them. They had been familiar with it from childhood, but now, for the first time, found that their Master, alike in His life and death, shone out from every page.

Such discourse shortened the road, and found them still eagerly listening as they approached Emmaus, the end of the journey. Climbing the hill path together, through the terraces of vines and olives, and passing under the village gate, they were presently at the house where the disciples were to stay. And, now, the stranger bade them adieu. What they had heard from Him, however, had interested them so much, that they longed to hear more. They begged Him, therefore, to lodge with them for the night, and this, the rather, as the day was far spent. Accepting the invitation, all three went into the house.

It must have been no small wonder to the Two, who the mysterious stranger could be. Nothing in His dress or speech gave them a clue, and they did not know His features. But a feeling of reverence kept them from asking.

Simple refreshments were presently set before them—among the rest, bread and wine. The stranger, as was His due, had the place of honour at table, and it fell to Him to hand what was before them, to the others. Only the three were present.

Presently the Unknown, taking the bread, offered the usual benediction—just as Jesus had done; broke the bread, just as Jesus had broken it; handed it to them, just as Jesus had handed it. Bearing, voice, and manner were His. And now, as they look at Him more closely,—the veil He had assumed passes away, and the very Face and Form, also, were His.

It was He! Meanwhile, as they gazed in awful wonder and reverence, He vanished.

No instance given illustrates, more strikingly, the adaptation of the Risen Saviour's self-disclosures to the requirements of His disciples. Their minds were first enlightened and their hearts warmed, till there was no longer a danger of affecting their senses only, but a security

of intelligent conviction, resting on impressions left by the discourse they had heard. They were gently led on till fully prepared, and then the APPEARANCE was granted in a way so inexpressibly touching and tender, that it no less fired their love than established their faith.

Left to themselves, the Two could speak only of what they had heard and seen—of how their hearts had glowed in their bosoms, as He talked with them along the road, and opened to them the Scriptures. Their ecstatic joy at having seen Him, whom they had known as the earthly Messiah, now unveiled to them as the Messiah, risen and glorified—the conqueror of death—can only be faintly imagined. Neither life nor death could ever efface the memory of it from their inmost hearts. But their brethren must know the great truth. Hastening, with quickened steps, back to Jerusalem, to reach it before the shutting of the gates, they found the Eleven, and a number of the disciples gathered together—the amazing rumours of the day the one engrossing theme of discussion. Peter, it seemed, had told them that Jesus had appeared to him, and, now, the Two added their amazing narrative. It was a thing so transcendent, however, and so unheard of, that any one should rise from the dead, that the company still fancied the women, and Peter, and the Two, under some strange delusion. They could not credit their story as a matter of fact.

It was still Sunday, and the assembled Eleven, with the others, had gathered at the table couches, to eat a simple evening meal together, before parting for the night, The doors were fast closed, for fear of any emissary of the high priests and Rabbis discovering them, and they were still discussing the strange reports they had heard, and justifying their incredulity. Suddenly, through the closed doors, a form appeared in their midst, which they at once recognized as that of Jesus. Presently, the salutation they had heard so often, sounded from His lips—the common Jewish greeting—Shalōm Lâchem. Peace to you!

The sight terrified and alarmed them. They could not realize that it was really Jesus Himself, but fancied it was His spirit.

"Why are you in such fear," said He, "and why do you not, at once, without any such doubts and questionings in your minds, recognize me as Him who I really am?" His hands were, of course, exposed beneath the sleeves of His abba, and His feet could be seen through His sandals. Holding up the former, and showing the marks of the great iron nails of the cross in the palms, and pressing back His abba, and disclosing the wounds on His feet—He went on—"Look at my hands and my feet—see the wounds of the nails—and be satisfied that it is I, Jesus, myself, who speak. And, that you may know that it is not my spirit you see, but the same Master you knew of old, come near and touch me, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see me have."

Evidence so convincing could leave no doubt, except from very joy at its completeness; for the return of their Lord, thus triumphant over the grave, was so stupendous a miracle that while they could not question it, their gladness would scarcely let them think it real. But still further proof was to be given. Knowing how easily the idea might spread that His appearances were merely those of a disembodied spirit, He asked them to let Him share their meal. They had broiled fish, and having set some before Him with wondering awe, He ate it in their sight. All doubt now fled: it was, indeed, their Risen Lord.

"Now that you are convinced that it is really I," continued Jesus, "let me remind you that the facts you have now verified—that I should die, and rise again from the dead—are the fulfilment of what I said to you while I was yet with you—that all that was written respecting me in the Scriptures, must be fulfilled in this way."

As the "Light of the World," He then proceeded to recall to their minds and explain more fully, the prophecies respecting Himself in the Books of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms,—the three divisions under which all the Holy Books were classed by the Jews; and showed their wonderful vividness as inspired anticipations of what had really happened in His own person.

"You see thus," added He, after giving this summary of the testimony of Scripture, "that it was necessary, in the Divine Counsels, that instead of founding an earthly kingdom, as you expected, the Messiah should suffer as I have done, and that He should rise from the dead, the third day, as you see has been the case with me. The purposes of God now further require that the need of repentance, and the promise of the remission of sins to be obtained through my death and resurrection, should be preached, henceforth, as the great end of all I have suffered, and as the Salvation I was sent as the Messiah to secure, not for Israel only but for all mankind. These truths you are to proclaim to all nations, but you are to begin at Jerusalem, that Israel may have still another opportunity of accepting me, and of being saved through my name, now I am risen and glorified; though they rejected me in my humiliation. And you, my disciples, are the witnesses through whom God will spread abroad this message of mercy to Jews and Heathen, and proclaim His new Heavenly Kingdom founded by me."

The wondering disciples now saw that He was about to leave them, once more. As He prepared to do so, however, He added:—

"Peace be with you! As my Father sent me, so I send you. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized, will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these miraculous signs will be granted those who believe, for a confirmation of their faith, and that they may win others. They will cast out devils in my name; they will speak with tongues new to them; they will take up serpents without

harm to themselves; if they drink any deadly thing it will not hurt them; and they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

"To fit you for your great work I shall presently send you the Helper promised by my Father, but stay in the city till you are clothed with this power from on high."

There were only ten of the Eleven present, for Thomas was absent, but, these, He now gathered before Him. As an earnest of the fuller endowment, hereafter, He was about to impart to them a special consecration by the Holy Spirit, to their office as Apostles. He had, Himself, compared the influence and entrance of the Spirit to the breathing of the wind, and, now, prefacing His intended words by the symbolical act of breathing on the Ten—He said:

"Receive ye the Holy Spirit. The government of the Church is committed to your charge. As a special gift for your work as founders of my Kingdom, divine insight is granted you to 'discern the spirits' of men, that so you may know their true state before God. Through you, therefore, henceforth, as through Me till now, He will announce the forgiveness of sins, and it will be granted by God to those to whom you declare it. Through you, moreover, He will make known to others that their sins are not forgiven, and to him to whom you are constrained to speak thus, to him his sins will not be forgiven by God till you announce their being so."

Having said this, He vanished from their sight.

It is impossible to realize the emotions of the little band of Apostles and disciples at these appearances. They knew that Jesus had been put to death: they had fancied themselves permanently deprived of His presence and help, and they had not known what to think respecting Him. But when He stood amidst them, once more, after He had risen, a sudden and strange revolution took place in their minds. They saw before them Him whom they had revered as the Messiah while clothed in human weakness, now raised to an unimaginable glory which at once confirmed and sublimed their former faith. They saw Him victorious over the grave, and clothed with the attributes of the eternal world. In a moment, the whole sweep of the truth respecting Him, hitherto only half realized, had become a radiant fact, even to their senses. The hesitating and imperfect belief in His heavenly dignity, and power to fulfil all He had promised, here and hereafter, which had slowly rooted itself in their hearts while He still lived, had seemed, after all, from the catastrophe of these last disastrous three days, a fond and beautiful delusion. But, now, at length, as He stood amongst them, triumphant even over death, it broke all restraints and flooded their whole soul with sacred light as never before, for the revulsion from despondency to the purest and holiest joy gave it additional strength.

It is impossible to conceive the effect of such sights of their Risen Master, on the minds of those who were thus favoured with them. The whole life of one who had seen Him and stood near Him, per-

haps touched Him, after He had risen, became a long dream of wonder. Such an one felt, henceforth, even in the midst of his commonest occupations, as if Christ were still, though unseen, beside him: he saw Him, as it were, radiant before his eyes: he seemed still to hear His words of infinite love, and lived in habitual communion with Him, as with One, hidden it might be, for the moment, in the upper light, but to be expected as a visible form, at any instant. We see this in every page of the Gospels and the Epistles.

Only the immeasurable force of the thought that the Son of God Himself, the true, glorified Messiah, had appeared to them; not, as hitherto, in the veil of the flesh, but in a heavenly transfiguration; victorious over death; that He had stood among them, had quickened and inspired them; perhaps had let Himself even be reverently touched—could have created such effects. Henceforth, he, only, was recognized as an Apostle in the fullest sense, who had seen Him in His spiritual body during this mysterious interval, when He seemed ready to soar to heaven as His rightful home, and, though still on earth, was no longer of it. Nothing could be more amazing than the result of such a sight of Him thus glorified, on the Apostles. From despair they passed at once to triumphant confidence—from incapacity to believe that the Messiah could have suffered as He had done to the most fervent and exulting faith in Him as the Messiah, on account of these very sufferings. They became, suddenly, men into whom the very spirit of Christ seemed to have passed; their spiritual nature had been wholly changed, and they were bound to Him, henceforth, with a deathless, and ecstatic devotion.

The appearances vouchsafed during the day of the Resurrection had now ended. On the part of the priests and Rabbis there had been great anxiety, for they, as well as the disciples, had early heard the rumours of His having risen. Some of the watch, after having fled in terror before the descending angel, had come into the city, and reported what had happened. A hasty meeting of the chief men of the party had been held, and the whole matter laid before them. Their perplexity was extreme, but at last their Sadducee leaders invented a specious story. Not believing in angels, they affected to think that the soldiers had been frightened away by some clever trick of the disciples, who had thus got possession of the body of their Master. There were, indeed, difficulties in the way of spreading such a story, but it would be fatal if the rumour spread that angels had appeared. The people would naturally think it a proof that Jesus had been what He said He was, and they would turn to Him with more ardour than ever. The guard were therefore instructed, with the inducement of large bribes, to say that they had fallen asleep, and found the body stolen when they woke. The hierarchy were aware that it was death for a sentry to sleep at his post, but removed this difficulty by the promise that, in case the story reached the ears of Pilate, they would explain that it was only an invention, to keep the

A whole week elapsed before the next appearance recorded. On Sunday; known, henceforth, as the "first day of the week," in contrast to the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day; and as, especially, "The Lord's Day;"—the Eleven having once more assembled, as they had done daily through the week, and continued to do, Jesus, honouring His resurrection day, once more stood in the midst of them. Thomas, known as Didymus, or The Twin, had not been present on the Sunday before, and in his grave, earnest way, refused to believe that Jesus had risen and had appeared to the Ten, till he himself had had what he deemed indisputable proof. "Except I see in His hands the prints of the nails," said he, "and put my finger into them, and put my hand into His side, where the spear-thrust made the gash, I will not believe." No one could desire more to see his Master again, but his temperament demanded what he thought demonstration, of so amazing a fact as the rising of one from the grave.

On this first Lord's day after the Resurrection, however, his doubts were for ever dispelled. The disciples had gathered in their common room, which held, at least, a hundred and twenty. The doors, as before, had been carefully closed, for fear of spies from the Temple, and the approaches were, doubtless, carefully watched. Suddenly, however, the words were heard in the midst of the company—"Peace to you!"—and, looking up, Jesus stood before them. He had not been near, so far as the senses could perceive, when Thomas had uttered his doubts, but He knew them not the less. Turning to the faithful but still incredulous one—whose presence there showed how eagerly he wished to believe the transcendent news, Jesus, to his amazement, addressed him—

"Thomas, thou saidst thou wouldst not believe, unless thou couldst put thy finger in the wounds of my hands, and feet, and side. Reach hither thy finger—here are my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side, and be not faithless, but believing."

To hear his own words thus repeated by one who had not been present when they were spoken: to see the hands, and feet, and side: to receive such condecension from one who he now felt was, indeed, his loved Master; yet no longer a mortal man, but the Lord of Life, the glorified Messiah who had triumphed over death, overwhelmed him with awe. No words could express his emotion. He could only utter his one deepest thought, that he had before him his Lord and his God.

"Thomas," said Jesus, "thou hast believed at last because thou hast seen me: blessed are they who, without having seen me, believe, as thou now dost, that I have risen from the dead."

Hitherto, the Risen Saviour, in all His appearances, so far as they are recorded, had designed to prove to His disciples that He was really alive again. Convinced of this, there was much to tell them, of "the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," which they were

to spread abroad through the earth. Before His death He had told them that He had many things to say to them, which were, as yet, too hard for them to understand or receive. These He had now to communicate; for what would have been incomprehensible before His sufferings and Resurrection, was dark no longer, when seen in the strong light of the cross and the empty grave.

He did not, however, mingle among them and live in their midst as of old. They, doubtless, expected that now He was alive again on earth, He would once more gather them around Him, and stay permanently with them, and they even fancied, that surely now at last He would set about the establishment of that earthly kingdom of Israel, to which they so fondly clung. But to have stayed thus familiarly with them, was no longer in keeping with His glorified immortality. Till they, too, had put on incorruption, He was separated from them, by the infinite distance and difference of time and eternity. They belonged to the former, He, now, to the latter.

He showed Himself, therefore, to them in such a way that they could never count on His taking up His abode with them again, as in former days; that so they might be accustomed gradually to his absence, as in no measure breaking or weakening their connection with Him. He, hence, vouchsafed them only intermitted appearances; that, on the one hand, they might be in no doubt of His really having risen from the dead; and, on the other, that they might become familiar with the idea of His leaving them. He showed Himself as One about to quit the world, and as no longer belonging to it, but delaying His departure for a time, for their good. His intercourse with them was, thus, almost like that of the angels with their fathers in the early ages, when they came to their tents, conversed with them, and even ate and drank what was offered them, but, presently, left again and disappeared, till some new occasion brought them back.

Hence we are no more told the place of His stay in these forty days, or of His journeys, or other details, as otherwise we might have expected. He appears only at intervals, and we have no trace whence He has come, or whither He vanishes. He does not travel back with His disciples to Galilee after the feast, as was usual, but only names a mountain on which He will meet them. They never ask Him, as He is about to leave them, whither He is going, or, when He comes, whence He has done so? His whole bearing towards them was like that to Mary of Magdala—"Think not that my Resurrection restores me to you as the companion of your daily life. Rejoice not over my reappearance as if I were to stay now, abidingly, with you. I go to my Father, and your Father—to my God, and yours."

He had told the women at the sepulchre, to say to His disciples that He would meet them on a mountain in Galilee, which He named, and He had, doubtless, repeated this to the company when in their midst. The most of them were Galilæans, and would return home after the feast week. Galilee had been, moreover, the special scene

of His labours, and of His success, and a greater number could be gathered together there than in Judea. Jerusalem was not to be their scene of action as yet. They could not begin their great Apostolic work while their Master was still on earth, and, besides, they needed not only many counsels before He left them, but the power which the Holy Spirit, who was not yet given, could impart. When they returned, to attend the Feast of Pentecost, seven weeks after the Resurrection, they would receive their full heavenly consecration.

The future was still unknown even to the Apostles, and hence, though they held themselves at the command of their Lord, the interval before, He required their permanent service, saw them once more, at their former callings. They seem to have had no idea that this visit to their homes would be the last they would ever make to them as such, or that, within a few weeks, they would remove to Jerusalem, to stay there for a time, and then wander forth to all lands, and see their native country, rarely, or never again. But the long attendance on their Master had prepared them for finally leaving everything for Him, and had fitted them, unconsciously, for the duties that lay before them.

Simon Peter, Thomas the Twin, Nathanael of Cana, John and James, sons of Zabdai, and two whose names are not given, apparently because they were not Apostles, had, among others, betaken themselves to the well-known shores of the Lake of Galilee, and had quietly set themselves, once more, to the occupation familiar to most of them—that of fishermen. They had been out on the Lake all night, but had caught nothing, and were rowing to land in the early dawn, when they saw on the shore a stranger, whom they could not recognize in the twilight, as any one they knew. It was nothing strange that a person should come to them as they were landing, to buy their catch. The simple habits of the East, moreover, made it common to sell even single fish, which were prepared and cooked on the spot, in the open air, by the buyer. They thought nothing, therefore, of the stranger presently asking them, with a kindly familiarity not unusual in antiquity in addressing the humbler classes, "Children, have you anything to eat?" ; as if wishing to buy for his morning meal. "Nothing at all," cried the fishermen.

"If you cast your net once more on the right side of the boat, you will find fish," said the stranger, and they, thinking, perhaps, that he had noticed a shoal they had overlooked, were only too glad to do so. But, now, the net sank, overloaded, so that they could hardly draw it after them as they rowed to land.

There was no further question who the stranger could be; for what was this incident but the repetition of a well-remembered miracle of their Master, almost at the same spot? "It is the Lord," whispered John to Peter. The name was enough. They were only about a hundred yards from land, but the ardent, impulsive Peter could not

wait. He was standing, naked, in the boat, after having swum round with the net, to sweep the waters, as is the custom on the Lake of Tiberias still; but he instantly drew on his upper garment, and, jumping into the water, swam ashore, to be the first to see if it really were his Master. The others, meanwhile, were slowly pulling to the shore, and presently reached it. The beach had been bare a moment before, but now, strangely enough, they saw a fire burning, with a little fish on it, and bread at hand, as if the stranger had intended them for Himself.

"If you would like to eat with me," said He, "bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Peter had not dared to speak, for the awe of his Lord's heavenly greatness, as one belonging, now, to a higher life, was on him. But he instantly ran to the boat, dripping, as he stood, and dragged ashore the net, which was found to have caught a hundred and fifty-three large fish, without being rent. All were convinced that it was Jesus, but they were dumb with amazement; and though they wished to ask, their awe, and their very eyesight, which told them that it was no other than their Master, kept them from doing so.

They had sat down on the white, dry beach, round the fire, at His invitation, and He now, once more, as of old, took His place as Head of the little group. Taking first bread, and then the fish, He divided them, just as He had done while He was with them, and, as He did so, His face and bearing were so exactly what they had been, that the fear produced by the suddenness of His appearance, and the undefined difference in Him which had struck them at first, soon abated. His every word was now doubly weighty, and hence John gives us a more than usually circumstantial narrative of what followed. The meal being finished, He turned to Peter, as if to show him by a further proof, how entirely his shortcoming had been forgiven, and the completeness of his restoration to his apostolate. He commonly called him Peter, but now addressed him as He had done three years before, when they first met, and only once since, when he made his grand confession of belief that his Master was the Messiah. "Simon, son of Jonas," asked He, "carest thou for me more than my other disciples?" "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Go and feed my little ones—my sheep," replied Jesus; "for love to me, care for the spiritual wants of all who know and love me, as a shepherd sees that his flock be duly fed." The same question, in the same words, was then repeated. "Yes, Lord," answered Peter, more eagerly than before, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Then, tend my sheep," replied Jesus. "Not only nourish, but care for them, as committed to thy charge." A third time the same question was asked—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" The treble repetition had something in it tender and warning. It was not a reproof, yet it was fitting that the disciple who, a few days before, had thrice denied Him, should be made to

think as often of his weakness. Peter felt it, and almost thought that Jesus doubted his trustworthiness. "Lord," said he, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." "Then," replied Jesus, "feed my sheep—the oversight of my flock is thine, to see that they are fed."

"Hear now," He continued, "what awaits you. Verily, verily, I say to you, Hitherto you have girded yourself and gone whither you pleased, and you do so still; but, in your old age you will stretch forth your hands helplessly, and will give yourself up to others, who will gird you with chains, and lead you off where you would fain not go—to the place of judgment." An assurance of safety for the present, and a timely warning of what the future would bring! There was a brief pause, and then the words "Follow me," summoned the Apostle once more, as of old; but spoken this time, by the risen and glorified Saviour—it called him to follow Him in a martyr's death, and then, to the glory beyond.

Peter, taking the last words literally, fancied he was to follow his Master as before, and as Jesus seemed now leaving them, had done so a few paces, when, turning round, he saw John coming after him. Unwilling to separate from one endeared by long companionship as a fellow-disciple, he, therefore, ventured to ask, in hope that John, too, would be allowed to come with them—"Lord, what will this man do?" But things were not as in old days of common familiar communion. "If I should please that he live till my return, why should you seek to know it?" replied Jesus. "From you I require that you follow me in the path in which I have gone before you."

St. Paul, about twenty-five years after, mentions another appearance, which was no doubt the same as is related, more fully, by St. Matthew. It took place in a mountain, appointed for the purpose by Jesus Himself, doubtless as a well-known spot. Here, a large number of disciples, including, as we know, the Eleven, gathered at the time fixed. It was a moment of supreme solemnity, for it was the close, so far as we know, of His ministry in Galilee. A mountain had been chosen, alike for privacy and because all who might come would be able to see their Master. Over five hundred had gathered when Jesus appeared in their midst; some of them long since dead when Paul wrote, but the majority still alive. With beautiful frankness, the Evangelist tells us that some, who likely had had no other witness, still doubted a miracle so stupendous, but they were so few that he could say of the multitude, as a whole, that they worshipped Jesus as their Lord.

Before this numerous assemblage Jesus declared Himself, in the loftiest sense, the Messiah. "All power," said He, "is given me, in heaven and in earth. As I have before commissioned my Apostles, so now I commission you all, in the fulness of the authority thus given me, to go into the whole world, and announce to all men that I live, and am exalted to be the Lord and the Messiah. Go, gather disciples

to me from among all nations, and consecrate them by baptism, to faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by whom God will speak and act through your means. What commands I have given you as my disciples, give you to them, and urge them to keep them. Nor must you think yourselves alone while thus working in my name, for lo, I am, and shall be, with you always, till the end of the world." As at the first, so, now, at the last, the WORD was the only weapon by which His Kingdom was to be spread. Resting on PERSUASION and CONVICTION from the beginning, it was left on the same basis now He was about to ascend to heaven.

Only two or perhaps three more appearances are recorded—one to James alone, and one to all the Apostles. The last known meetings with the Eleven took place immediately before the Ascension. It was the Parting for Ever, so far as outward and visible communion on earth was concerned—the final delegation of the interests of His Kingdom to them, as His chosen heralds and representatives. They were instructed to wait in Jerusalem till the promise of the Father was fulfilled; that He would send the Holy Spirit to them, as their Helper and Advocate, in place of their departed Master—a promise which Jesus Himself had made known to them. "For John," said He, "truly baptized with water, but the promise which even he announced, that you would be baptized with the Holy Spirit, will be fulfilled before many days."

The Apostles, acquainted as they were with the Old Testament prophecies, which foretold that the fulness of the Holy Spirit would be poured out in the times of the Messiah, seem to have fancied that there was an indirect promise of the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, as they conceived it, in these words. It appears as if an interval had elapsed—apparently only a part of the same day, between the appearance at which the renewed assurance of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit was given, and that at which the question they were now to ask was put. When they had come together again, Jesus once more stood among them, and then—so hard is it to uproot fixed preconceptions—they resolved to find out, if possible, whether they had any grounds for their fond hopes.

"Lord," asked they, "wilt Thou at this time restore the fallen kingdom of the Israelitish nation?" They had not yet received the illumination of the Spirit, which was to raise them at once and for ever above such narrow and national views, and were still entangled in Jewish fancies, which regarded the Messiah as sent to the Jewish people, as such, for its earthly glory as well as spiritual good.

Jesus would not answer such a question. There was much in their expectations which would never be realized; yet the gift of the Spirit would really be the true setting up of the Kingdom of the Messiah. Of its final proclamation and full establishment in its glory, which would take place at His final return, He would say nothing. It lay hidden in the depths of the future, and was of no advantage to them

to know. "It is of no use to you," said He, "to know the time or the circumstances of these great revolutions in the ages to come. The Father has kept these as a secret of His own omniscience. Be it enough for you to know what will happen immediately on my departure. You will receive the powers of the Holy Spirit in rich measure, and inspired by these, and prepared by them in all points, you will go forth as witnesses for me, and of my resurrection, not only to Jerusalem and Judea, but to hated Samaria, and to the heathen throughout the whole earth; for mine is a universal kingdom, open to all mankind, without distinction of race, or rank; of bond or free; of barbarian or Greek; of Jew or Gentile."

This last interview had taken place in Jerusalem, but He had left it before He closed, leading them out towards Bethany. He may have walked through the well-known streets, veiled from His enemies, or He may have appointed the meeting-place for them, where He had so often, in His last days, retired in their company. The place where He assembled them is not minutely recorded, but was on the Mount of Olives. It was the last time they were to see Him. He had prepared them, as far as their dulness made possible, for His leaving them, and had fitted them to receive the gift of the Spirit, which, within a few days, would illuminate their intellects and hearts.

He wished, however, to leave them in such a way that they should not think He had simply vanished from them, and wait for His present re-appearance. He would show them, as far as it could be shown, that He returned from the earth to His Father; that God took Him to Himself as He had taken Elias. They would be able to tell men, when they asked where He now was, that they had seen Him leave the world, and pass through the skies to the eternal kingdoms, in His human body; to sit down at the right hand of God. The thought—HE LIVES: HE IS WITH the FATHER! was, henceforth, to be the stay and joy of His followers in all ages.

We know not with what last parting words he let them see He was, now, finally, to leave them. All that is told us is, that He gave them His blessing, with uplifted hands. Step by step, He had raised their conceptions of Him nearer the unspeakable grandeur of His true nature and work. At first the Teacher, He had, after a time, by gradual disclosures, revealed Himself as the Son of God, veiled in the form of man; and, now, since His crucifixion and resurrection, He had taught them to see in Him the Messiah, exalted to immortal and divine majesty, as the conqueror of death and the Lord of all.

The transcendent miracle which closed His early communion with His chosen ones is most fully narrated by St. Luke:—

"When He had spoken these things, while they were looking at Him, He was taken up into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight"—that cloud which symbolized the presence of God. "And as they were gazing earnestly into the heavens, as He ascended, behold two men stood by them, in white apparel, and said to them—

'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing into the heavens? This same Jesus, who is even now taken from you into heaven, will come, in the same way as ye have seen Him go.'"

"Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the Universe of God; thou Bethlehem, amongst the princely cities of the heavens; thou art, and remainest, the Loved One amongst ten thousand suns and worlds, the Chosen of God! Thee will He again visit, and then thou wilt prepare a throne for Him, as thou gavest Him a manger cradle; in His radiant glory wilt thou rejoice, as thou didst once drink His blood and His tears, and mourn His death! On thee has the Lord a great work to complete!"

THE END.

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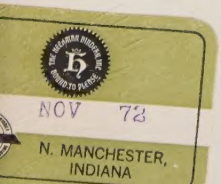
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